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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A Fringe of What?
The Three Streams of Canadian Theatre

by

Kenneth Brown

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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Date: 2 October/89

The theatre in Canada has experienced three major phases of growth, a first, second, and third stream.

First stream theatres were established between the late fifties and the end of the sixties. Run largely by foreign-trained directors, they aimed at high standards of production. Essentially, these were colonial institutions in the sense that their repertoire consisted largely of classics and imported plays from the United States and Europe. They also tended to produce material that was politically bland, partly because of their commitment to the theatre as a primarily aesthetic experience, and partly because they were appealing to a bourgeois audience.

In the late sixties many new theatres were founded by a second generation of Canadian theatre workers, driven by the desire to establish a theatre that was Canadian in its sensibility, its form, and its content. They also brought counter-cultural and working-class values to the theatre. By the end of the 1970s, Canada could boast a real theatre of its own, with a solid body of dramatic literature, and a national theatrical infrastructure.

As the 1980s wore on, these theatres found themselves operating in certain characteristic modes, needing to satisfy both the funding bodies' requirements and the growing dependence on audience subscriptions.

Into this stultified atmosphere was born the third stream, symbolized, and partly led, by the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Event, which is ideally suited to the needs of third

stream theatres, in providing an administrative structure and physical theatre spaces, both of which third stream theatres inherently lack. Because third stream theatres are project-oriented rather than season-oriented, they tend to rely less heavily on the Director-led model that is characteristic of both the first and second streams. Furthermore, because it is in the truest sense "poor theatre," the third stream admirably suited to the playwright.

ABSTRACT:

The theatre in Canada has experienced three major phases of growth, a first, second, and third stream.

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INTRODUCTION

That the annual theatre festival known as the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Event has been phenomenally successful is now obvious. From its modest beginnings in 1982, when some 7,500 tickets were sold, to its present status as an international theatrical event with a claimed patronage of 285,000, it has been home to a wide variety of theatre artists creating shows which diverge widely in theme, style, content, and artistic merit. One remarkable facet of this growth is the fact that so much of the creative force has come from an element of the theatrical community that has had no outlet in the general scheme of the Canadian theatre prior to the time the Fringe was founded.

It therefore seems possible that the Fringe festival coincides with the growth of a new movement in Canadian theatre, one which is well-adapted to benefit from the structures and opportunities of the Fringe, and which is distinct from previous movements in the Canadian theatre. Those who create plays for the Fringe work within limitations qualitatively different from those which have confronted the members of other, earlier movements in our short national theatrical history.

In this thesis, I propose to to delineate three movements, or "streams" in the modern Canadian theatre: to show how each has had its own distinct historical

situation and priorities, and thus to come to a fresh understanding of how a "third stream" of Canadian theatre artists differs from the previous two. 1 For the purposes of this study, I shall define the first stream as that which began in the 1950s with the Stratford Shakespearean Festival (1953), and continued with the growth of the regional theatre network initiated by the foundation of the Manitoba Theatre Centre in 1958. This first stream was an important step forward for the development of Canadian theatre, in that it was the first lasting professional theatre movement in Canada. It brought a high quality of production, and gave both the audiences and the artists themselves a taste for professional theatre. This group of theatres includes the Stratford Festival (1953), the Shaw Festival (1962), Manitoba Theatre Centre (1958), the Citadel Theatre (1965), the Vancouver Playhouse (1963), Theatre Calgary (1968), and Theatre New Brunswick (1968), as well as Toronto Arts Productions, now transmuted by its alliance with Toronto Free Theatre into CentreStage. One might also include Saskatoon's Persephone Theatre and the Bastion Theatre in Victoria, since, although these latter three came lately to the field, they represent fairly large regional organizations and are philosophically akin to the other first stream theatres. 2 Broadly speaking, these first stream organizations share in common a commitment to providing their audiences with a wide range

of professionally produced plays from the international repertoire.

Between 1953 and 1975, these companies grew into very substantial organizations. They secured for themselves a large amount of state subsidy, built the most opulent theatre facilities in the country, and dedicated themselves to international standards of production strongly based in the British tradition, which was not surprising given the large numbers of British-born or trained people who were members of this elite.

However, this first stream failed to serve the needs of a truly national theatre, in that it concerned itself with the production of world drama, and did little to nurture Canadian plays. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, concurrent with an immense growth in theatrical activity and with a strong nationalist movement, many Canadian theatre artists, alienated by the first stream theatres' elitist and international focus, began to create their own theatres, and a second stream was born.

The second stream was motivated by a strong desire to express a distinctive national flavour in our theatre. Like the later third stream, the theatre practitioners who founded the second stream were a group of people whose alienation from the mainstream, whose rejection of it, or rejection by it forced them to invent their own theatres. Poorer in physical resources, second stream

theatres also experimented with theatrical form in a way the first stream theatres had not.

Renate Usmiani has marked the beginning of the second stream theatre movement as the First Underground Theatre Festival in Toronto in 1970, at which time Tom Hendry dubbed it the "alternate" theatre movement. 3 The second stream theatres were so successful during the 1970s and early 1980s that they established a body of work, an audience base, and administrative organizations which would ensure their continued existence. Vastly increasing the number of theatres across the country, they decentralized theatrical activity by widening the audience base and by increasing the volume of activity by theatre professionals. Whereas the epithet "regional" had been given to many of the first stream theatres, the second stream theatres were more truly regional in the sense that they tended to focus more upon their regions by giving wider opportunity to professionals from their regions and producing plays by local playwrights which reflected a truly regional ethos. They were also sustained by a growing system of state support, and so developed symbiotic relationships with government funding bodies like the Canada Council, and various provincial and civic agencies newly created to oversee cultural concerns. They gave practical training and a sense of professional community to a network of people who were

and remain some of the most influential players in the Canadian theatre scene.

Canadian dramatists, given theatres that were willing to produce their work, wrote more plays in ten years than Canadians had written in the nation's history. Indeed, many second stream theatres mandated themselves for precisely that development. Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille (1968), Factory Theatre Lab (1970), Tarragon Theatre (1971), Halifax's Pier One (1971), Toronto Free Theatre (1972), Newfoundland's Mummer's Troupe (1972), Saskatoon's 25th Street Theatre (1971), NDWT Theatre (1975), Winnipeg's Prairie Theatre Exchange, Edmonton's Theatre Network (1975), Workshop West (1978), and Catalyst Theatres, and Vancouver's Tamanhous Theatre (1971) and New Play Centre (1970) are all examples of second-stream theatres whose prime focus was on new Canadian writing. For the first time, Canadian playwrights were writing with some reasonable expectation of recognition and even financial remuneration.

In the early 1970s, a number of second-stream theatres became identified with the work of specific playwrights. In Toronto David French, James Reaney and David Freeman wrote for the Tarragon Theatre, NDWT Theatre, and Factory Theatre Lab. George F. Walker also found a home at the Factory. This pattern was followed elsewhere in Toronto and across the country in the later 1970s, as theatres began to woo local playwrights. David

Fennario's fruitful association with Montreal's Centaur Theatre, and Frank Moher's ongoing participation at Theatre Network in Edmonton are two of the more successful collaborations.

Toronto Workshop Productions (1961), under the direction of George Luscombe, had begun to experiment with the technique of collective creation. Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille took up this method of work, and became the most visible proponents, under Paul Thompson's leadership, of a style of collective creation which was to have a profound impact on theatre practice from the Mulgrave Road Co-op (1977) in Atlantic Canada to 25th Street Theatre and Theatre Network on the prairies, to Tamanhous Theatre in Vancouver.

In Alberta, the second stream was flowing by 1971 with the creation of Theatre 3 in Edmonton, and shortly thereafter, the Edmonton Experimental Theatre (1972). While the former concentrated on formal experimentation, the latter presented new plays by Isabel Foord and Rod Menzies, and was the first Edmonton theatre to attempt a collective creation.

By the end of the 1970s, there were over one hundred sixty professional theatre organizations in Canada, most either belonging to, or in the process of joining, the newly-formed Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (P.A.C.T.). Furthermore, the Canadian Actors' Equity Association (Equity), which had in 1976 broken

away from its American counterpart, was a powerful and well-organized group which spoke for the concerns of actors, directors, and stage managers who worked at both first and second stream theatres. The existence of an organization which represented theatre workers from both the first and second stream put them in one respect on an equal footing. The second stream had gained a place alongside the first.

In the past dozen years, we have seen a further growth in the theatre in Canada, but not along the same lines as that of the second stream. The training institutions such as the National Theatre School and the various university drama programs have continued yearly to graduate large numbers of students into a market that can hardly bear a fraction of those looking for work as actors, directors, technicians and designers. Economic recession has created a sense of doubt about the future of Canadian theatre and has caused an artistic retrenchment. We see much more timid work being done by the second stream theatres as their administrators and boards of directors become cautious about losing their hard-won audiences, which to an increasing extent consist of subscribers. Caught between government austerity and a growing national sentiment that the private sector should help pay, theatres to turn to corporations for sponsorship, and whether or not this patronage is as

disinterested as the support forthcoming from the state is questionable.

In spite of these pressures, there is a large, relatively well-trained work force of young theatre people whose training has imbued them with a certain idealism and energy. They are out looking for work, and where they have found none, many have tended to make their own. They are creating a third stream of Canadian theatre on the fringes of both the first and the second stream organizations, which have together become a kind of Canadian theatre establishment. Like those people who created the second stream in the 1970's, they operate in alienation from the status quo. However, in the colder economic climate of the 1980's, and faced with a large establishment of theatre organizations, this third stream theatre differs significantly.

First, their organization is much less formal. Whereas the first and second stream theatres have developed long-term organizations, with boards of directors, permanent administrative bodies, and are organized around an artistic directorship, the third stream groups tend to be project-oriented, and to change personnel freely. Second, they operate without facilities, borrowing theatre space, costumes, props, and scenery from the more established organizations. Third, they are developing a repertoire that is changing the face of Canadian drama by the liberty that is taken with

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dramatic form. Fourth, third stream theatres have neither the prestige, nor the administrative wherewithal to garner wide corporate sponsorship, and is thus free of such sponsorship's cloying influence. Finally, these groups operate for the most part outside the aegis of the system of public funding which has been erected to assure the ongoing activities of the earlier theatres. This is highly significant in aesthetic terms, as it means that their work is done without, and in some cases in spite of, any judgment being passed by a quasi-governmental body whose responsibility for disbursing funds makes them an arbitor of taste. Their major outlet in western Canada has become a "circuit" of Fringe festivals which provide an open forum for their work. The most important of these is the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Event.

Some observers have noted that the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Event is not, like the Edinburgh Fringe which partly inspired it, really the fringe of a larger, more prestigious event or festival, and ask "what is it the fringe of?" The answer, it is apparent, is, "of everything else."

As this thesis represents an attempt to introduce the notion of three streams into which the Canadian theatre can be delineated, and is not intended to be an overview of the recent history of Canadian theatre. That subject is broad enough to deserve a large volume, and cannot be encompassed within the range of a thesis. I

have, however, extracted what I feel are some of the significant events in the history of our theatre in order to illustrate the main thrust of this thesis.

I also wish to indicate before proceeding that I am using some new terms. Since there is no really convenient term for those who practise several occupations in the theatre, I have chosen to employ in this study the term "theatricians," coined, to the best of my knowledge, by Michael Mawson, himself an actor, teacher, and director of long standing in Canada. The term conveniently embraces those many theatre practitioners in the country who frequently work in more than one theatrical discipline.

Finally, I wish to point out that in analysing the successive movements in the Candian theatre in terms of "streams," I am consciously avoiding labels like "mainstream" and "alternative," since for some time there has been a lack of critical clarity about what constitutes an "alternative" theatre company. I believe that this terminology may have been valid at a time when there was a clear demarcation between Canada's established regional theatres and the large Festivals on one hand, and those smaller theatres that grew up in the early 1970's. Further discussion of how the term "alternate theatre" has become encumbered with ambiguity is to be found at the beginning of Chapter Three.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. It is not within the range of this thesis to discuss developments in Quebec, or indeed in French Canada in general. Although the theatre in Quebec has grown in ways which parallel theatrical developments in English Canada over the past two generations, they are quite distinct from it, and there has been very little cross-fertilization of ideas between the two language groups. While I find this regrettable, I also believe it to be a fundamental and ongoing fact of our tenuous nationhood. Therefore, when I refer to "Canadian theatre" in this paper, I am referring to English Canadian theatre; indeed, it has been my experience that quebecois theatricians generally prefer to be referred to as quebecois, and not as Canadian.
2. Although Regina's Globe Theatre, founded in 1966, is historically part of the same movement that brought theatre to major centres in the 1960s, I am not for the purposes of this paper including it in my list of first stream theatres, since philosophically the Globe differs vastly from most first stream theatres in its strong commitment to its local community, its support of local playwrights, and its prairie populist perspective.
3. Renate Usmiani, "The Alternate Theatre Movement," *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions*, ed. Anton Wagner (Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1985), p. 50.

CHAPTER ONE

> There is no such thing, anywhere, as a great national theatre that draws solely on native resources, and Stratford, which began by raising itself firmly on a foundation of Shakespeare... called upon artists everywhere who were, in the eyes of all but the most blinkered nationalists, our kinsfolk and colleagues...
>
> We needed teachers, and we knew where to find them. 1

I. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE FIRST STREAM CANADIAN THEATRES.

The existence of a professional theatre in English Canada is a relatively recent development. There were antecedents, such as the John Holden Players in Muskoka (1934), Toronto's New Play Society under Dora Mavor Moore (1946), and Vancouver's Everyman Theatre Company (1946), all professional companies. Also, the Dominion Drama Festival, which ran yearly (except during the war years) from 1932 until 1970,

> ...provided incentives and opportunities for actors, directors, playwrights, designers, and technicians; it built and maintained audiences across the country; it kept theatre in the public eye; ultimately it created the circumstances that made Canadian professional theatre possible in the 1950s. 2

However, it was not until the 1950's that professional theatres emerged from amongst the many groups which were practising amateur or community theatre. With the advent of the Jupiter Theatre (1950) and the Crest Theatre (1954) in Toronto, the Canadian Players, and the prestigious 1953 opening of the Stratford Festival, the Canadian public was finally confronted with theatre

artists who were demanding to be permanently acknowledged as professionals. Many came from a strong community theatre or amateur background, and had an uphill battle to convince the public that professional theatre was a necessary part of the nation's cultural life.

Even with the clear success of the first Stratford Shakespearean Festival, the notion that we should have a national theatre which depended for its voice upon Canadian writers and directors seemed a distant dream. Stratford's director, the late Sir Tyrone Guthrie, predicted a slow start for Canadian theatre in general. In a 1953 article, he wrote:

> ...in my view there is not at present a sufficiently large public to sustain a theatre operating continuously with a company of the standard mustered at Stratford this summer. Quite soon there may be. And I hope that the establishment of a company of Canadian professional actors might soon be followed by the creation of a repertoire of plays expressing Canadian life. But if this occurs in fifty years it will be good going. 3

His assumption that the creation of a body of plays "expressing Canadian life" might take as much as half a century was shared, it seems, by other interested observers, as we shall see, but subsequent events were to prove him wrong. The notion that Canadians could earn a theatre of their own by creating it was to become concrete fact over the next three decades, when the number of Canada's professional theatres grew from three to some three hundred.

During the late 1950s and the 1960s, a number of regional theatre organizations were founded in Halifax, Fredericton, southern Ontario, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, and Victoria. During the 1960s these theatres grew into institutions which I should characterize as a first stream of Canadian theatre: they had the strongest administrative structures, the heaviest state support, a high public profile, and the richest theatre facilities. Furthermore, their repertoire, stalwartly based in the classics, reflected their commitment to high-quality productions of world drama. In fact, their failure to produce Canadian plays was to become a kind of *idée fixe*, which has endured a storm of controversy in the late sixties and beyond.

With the success of such institutions as the Neptune Theatre, Theatre New Brunswick, Toronto Arts Productions, the Stratford Festival, the Shaw Festival, the Manitoba Theatre Centre, the Citadel Theatre, Theatre Calgary, the Vancouver Playhouse and Victoria's Bastion Theatre, Canada had a group of professional, legitimate theatres. These ventures had several things in common: first, they were largely the labours of Britons, or of Canadians with a strong British background -- either those who had brought with them from Great Britain (or the Irish Republic) their competence in and love of the theatre, or those who had been trained in Britain or in the British tradition. From their inception to the present day, a large proportion of

these theatres have been directed by men with British accents: Sir Tyrone Guthrie (the Irishman who was invited to Canada from England to found and to inspire the Stratford Festival); Michael Langham (Stratford); Peter Coe (Citadel); Bernard Hopkins (Grand Theatre); Gordon MacDougall (Citadel); Derek Goldby (Shaw, Stratford); Christopher Newton (Theatre Calgary, the Vancouver Playhouse and the Shaw Festival); Malcolm Black (Vancouver Playhouse, Theatre New Brunswick), Sean Mulcahy (Citadel); John Neville (The Citadel and Neptune theatres, and later Stratford); and Robin Phillips (Stratford, the Grand Theatre in London, Ontario, and as of 1989, the Citadel). Pam Brighton (Vancouver Playhouse, Stratford) is a female exception.

The second thing these theatres shared was their status as the flagship theatres of their region. This was particularly significant outside of Toronto, where the first stream theatres were in fact the first fully professional theatre companies in the centres of Halifax, Saint John, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, and Victoria. These organizations were thus justified in perceiving in themselves as the purveyors of theatrical culture in their respective regions, and came to be known loosely as the "regional" theatres.

Third, these theatres were, and continue to be for obvious historical reasons, the most established organizations in Canada. They have the largest budgets;

thus they have best physical facilities and the largest administrative staffs. They are without exception highly subsidized by all three levels of government, and since their stature in their respective communities is secure, they can bespeak a relatively high level of sponsorship from the private sector as well.

Fourth, these companies perceived themselves as bearers of the European dramatic tradition, and consequently as purveyors of high culture to their respective communities. This attitude was apparent in an article that Edward Gilbert wrote for the *Canadian Theatre Review* in 1974, presumably in light of the cultural nationalist movement whose members were suggesting such measures as a Canadian content quota in all government-sponsored Canadian theatres. He submitted the following view:

> I have the impression that elements of the art community in this country plan to organize their way to higher levels of accomplishment -- an adjustment of funding patterns here, a redistribution of responsibilities there, a few quick policy changes and hey, presto... better art. Well, it's just not going to work like that. I don't wish to suggest that nothing is gained by improving the circumstances under which artists create and present their efforts, but I confidently offer the opinion that it is not the circumstances which are limiting the present level of attainment. What we are short of is talent and will; hardly anyone in this country is truly excellent at anything, or truly determined to become so. What is worse, individual, regional and national vanities being what they are, the truth is obscured by a consipiracy of pietistic mumbo jumbo with the result that our expectations are set far too low. Why should we settle for less than has

> already been acheived -- by Euripides and Shakespeare and Chekhov, by Dean and Duse and Olivier, by Brecht and Copeau and Reinhardt, by Gordon Craig and Robert Edmond Jones? Of course most of us will fall short, but unless we aspire to the farthest known reaches of our art and then beyond, we are not artists at all. 4

What is evident here is a view which assumes that art is an essentially elite activity, in which the artist strives to attain a level of excellence against some international standard. It is a view that informed not only Mr. Gilbert as a theatrician, but also the Canada Council, which granted the Manitoba Theatre Centre money to promote theatre based on this aesthetic, as we shall see.

Classic plays were prominent, and remain prominent, in the seasons of these theatres, with particular emphasis on the plays of Shakespeare (which is hardly surprising, given the predominance of British directors in these theatres). An examination of plays presented at eleven representative first stream theatres in both the 1973-1974 and the 1980-1981 seasons illustrates this. In the former season, a total of 81 plays presented, 20 were classics (on the somewhat arbitrary basis of their having been written before 1900); 5 were by Shakespeare. In the latter season, 127 plays were presented, 25 being classics and of those, 11 were by Shakespeare. 5 Typically, the seasons of these theatres included many newer British, American and Continental plays, notably new plays from Broadway and London's West End, as well what might be

termed modern classics by such playwrights as Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, John Osborne, Jean Anouilh, Bertolt Brecht, or Garcia Lorca. What were noticeably lacking, until after the early 1970s, were Canadian plays.

The development of this first stream theatre was parallel to the development of support for theatre on the part of the Canada Council. The Council had been born subsequent to the Massey Commission report of 1951, which had advocated an active role for the state in sustaining the nation's culture. It recommended a Council modeled on the British Arts Council. Ironically, as one critic has pointed out, although the Council represented the first organized subvention of the arts by the state in Canada, its founding funds were

> ...drawn from death duties on the estates of two multi-millionaires who had had the good taste to die in a timely manner. This rationale was very Canadian, suggesting that it was all right to fund culture with a windfall from the rich rather than use tax revenues contributed equally by all citizens--another variation of the luxury and frills motif. 6

Walter Whittaker has observed that as "Council policy emerged it was to focus itself around five main areas of need," those being first, the need for trained actors; second, the need for Canadian playwrights; third, a series of regional theatres to as it were span the country; fourth, "a good standard of live professional theatre to be brought to communities which otherwise would never have

opportunities for such an experience"; and fifth, for "the theatre to achieve a high standard of excellence." 7

In practice, it seems that the latter was a high priority, that it was that "need which affected all operations." In the First Annual Report of the Canada Council, covering the period to March 31, 1958, it was evident that enthusiasm for the quality of existing theatre was not high.

> Applications have been received from many local theatre groups. These range from the few fully professional groups to those giving an annual school play. Many of them are very good. Hardly a town or a village is without its dramatic organization. We are informed that there are three hundred of such groups of what may be called "drama festival" calibre and thousands of others across the country. Ordinarily organizations such as these should be sustained by local support. However, there may be some theatrical organizations which because of some special quality or activity should receive assistance. In this connection the Council is making a special study of local theatre groups. 8

The number of groups that were considered to possess "some special quality" (in English Canada, at least) was limited. In 1957, the Council's first year, there were only three English-Canadian theatrical organizations which were given money, these being The Canadian Players, the Dominion Drama Festival, and the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, the latter receiving more money than the others combined. That august Canadian organization devoted to the work of England's long-dead bard was to receive the lion's share of support from the Canada Council:

> Having committed itself to the support of excellence, the Canada Council gave grants to the Festival totalling some $240,000 during the six years from 1957-63. 9

Supporting the Stratford Festival, while seemingly helping to satisfy the mandate of achieving "excellence," could do little to foster the creation of a national theatre, since the existence of a single organization in southern Ontario did little either to present theatre to other parts of the country, to nurture theatre practitioners in places other than southern Ontario, or to nurture those playwrights who were supposedly going to emerge someday and "demand to have their plays produced." This phrase appeared in the 1961 Annual Report of the Canada Council, which while questioning what the future held for Canadian drama, lamented that if

> ...we strain our eyes a little further down the road in this hazy light, we still cannot see in any direction those essential figures on the theatrical landscape -- the playwrights of great talent. 10

Regretting the lack of talented playwrights was not going to bring them out of the haze, since playwrights had little outlet for their work.

The geography of the country suggested that means of spreading theatrical culture had to be found. By the early 1960s, Council policy with regard to the theatre seemed to be based on the linchpin notion of "regional" theatres.

> At the 1961 Canadian Conference of the Arts at the O'Keefe Centre we went armed to a private meeting of theatre people with an idea previously developed --that the essential of a *national* theatre in Canada was that it should

> reach a *national* audience, even if this audience must for convenience be boiled down into regional audiences. This idea was embraced and consequently with all prudence we supported initiatives for the development of regional theatres. 11

Indeed, these initiatives had exactly the desired effect. In 1969, Nathan Cohen, in a lecture given at York University, pointed out that

> ...nearly all of the professional theatres we now have in Canada have come into existence since the Canada Council was established. Regional theatres in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Fredericton and Halifax... the Shaw Festival, the Charlottetown Festival, Toronto Workshop Productions, the Canadian Mime Theatre... 12

The model for the regional theatre system was Winnipeg's Manitoba Theatre Centre, which came into existence in 1958 and which received its first grant from the Council in 1959. Under the direction of John Hirsch, the Centre offered a wide-ranging season of plays over the next several years, and

> ...by 1963, a formula had been created which had proved itself sound and was to be the basis for future operation. This included two classics, two contemporary plays which could become classics or at least plays of merit, one play which was being studied in the Winnipeg schools, one original play, and two productions aimed at the box office, one of which would usually be a musical. 13

This formula worked so well that the Manitoba Theatre Centre increased its audience, its budgets and its profile in the city of Winnipeg until it became the model, not only for other first stream theatres in Canada, but for

large regional theatres in the United States as well. Indeed, the formula has endured so well that Brian Brennan, writing of prairie regional theatres in the mid-1980's could list as typical a very similar season:

> The major regional theatres in the five prairie cities, with the exception of Regina's Globe -which concentrates almost exclusively on Canadian and other plays with social or political themes- tend to offer a choice of repertory that is somewhat timorous and relentlessly middle-of-the-road. A typical six-play season at any one of these theatres will likely include a period classic (Shakespeare, Moliere or Goldoni), a contemporary American or English classic (Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, George Bernard Shaw), a modern commercial comedy (Neil Simon, Alan Ayckbourn), a small-cast musical comedy or review, one or two recent hits from Broadway or the West End, and occasionally a new Canadian work. In terms of programming, therefore, these prairie theatres are essentially no different from theatre operating in other parts of Canada. 14

While the Canada Council has reaped deserved praise for its execution of the monumental and fundamental task with which it was charged, some critics have seen in the Canada Council's support of the theatre a certain lack of policy:

> The Canada Council did not have a fixed theater policy which it endeavoured to implement.... There were certain overall objectives in the Council's planning of support, although these were in the nature of operating principles rather than a theatrical plan. The principle of touring professional companies, of supporting a high standard of established professional theatre, creating a National Theater School, developing a regional theater pattern, and maintaining contact between writers and the theater so that a native drama could emerge; all these were principles which the Council optimistically wanted to be in operation. 15

Whatever optimism the Council evinced about the emergence of a "native drama," it was clear that this emergence was low on the list of priorities, since it was not until after a network of theatres had been established that this contact between writers and theatres was meaningfully made, and then not with the first-stream theatres of which the Council had played a decisive role in the founding. As Mark Czarnecki points out:

> It is curious... that the Canada Council's statement of specific aims for regional theatres, apart from encouraging them to commission plays, does not explore in any detail the organic relationship between playwrights and theatres. Presumably the Council, by stating that the regionals must have strong local roots, might have felt it redundant to spell out that those roots would naturally sprout playwrights. 16

It is revealing to read, ten years after the birth of the Canada Council, what the effusive writer of the *Annual Report* felt was worthy of note about the 1966-67 theatre season:

> ...we can at least begin firmly with a record of some remarkable achievements set down at random from old programmes thrown lovingly but haphazardly into a drawer.
>
> For instance: Guy Hoffman being very funny in le Theatre du Nouveau Monde's *Le Malade Imaginaire* and *Le Dindon*, and his brief and terrified appearance as the French soldier in Stratford's earlier *Henry V*; William Hutt at Stratford, incomparable as Pandarus in *Troilus and Cressida*, unbelievably vague as Mr. Justice Shallow in *Henry IV, Part 2*; also there, Eric Christmas as old Adam in *As You Like It*, Douglas Campbell's towering Othello, and Kate Reid's deeply human Emilia; elsewhere, Jean-Louis Roux's delightfully effete study of Trissont in

> *Les Femmes Savantes*, and Gratien Gélinas' moving performance as Bousille in his own play; Denise Pelletier dominating *Le Placard* at l'Egregore, Zoe Caldwell as Manitoba's very Mother Courage, Yvette Brind'Amour as one of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, Dyne Mousso as Strindberg's own Miss Julie and (back at Stratford) Christopher Plummer's true panache as Cyrano. 17

What seems to have escaped the writer's attention is the fact that, with the single exception of the glancing reference to Gélinas' *Bousille the Just*, not a single other Canadian play was mentioned in the list of great accomplishments.

Indeed, Canadian dramatic literature was mentioned only once in this, the Canada Council's tenth annual report, when the writer asked, rhetorically, if the newly-rising regional theatres could "...uncover playwrights of quality and thus provide a social commentary on our own society". 18

Apparent here is a very parochial view, for the theatre that the Council was lauding so highly, and the theatre that it had chosen to support, was one dominated by foreign plays, and directed largely by men whose primary cultural experience was from outside Canada.

While the growth of a series of strong regional theatres that Nathan Cohen was to mention in 1969 "in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Fredericton and Halifax" was a matter of prime importance, since they were to serve as a decentralized source of inspiration, and in some cases a training ground, for a whole generation of

Canadian actors and technicians, these theatres were neo-colonial institutions in the sense that they looked abroad for plays and directors, and thus for models of what theatrical experience might be. The productions of plays, as good as they might have been, were frequently Canadian only insofar as they employed Canadian actors and technicians.

Nevertheless, the very existence of a series of new, vital, and reasonably well-funded professional theatres boded well for the future development of Canadian theatre, and the modest hopes of the writer of the 1966-67 Canada Council report were exceeded in the next ten years beyond his wildest expectations.

II. PARALLEL DEVELOPMENTS IN EDMONTON

These developments of the theatre on the national scale were paralleled very closely in Edmonton, with the creation of the Citadel Theatre in a building that had once served as a Salvation Army centre, and from whence the theatre took its name. Although the Citadel was to become a very model of a first stream theatre, it is clear that this was not the intention of its founder, Edmonton lawyer Joseph Shoctor. It was the first professional theatrical organization that was to succeed in Edmonton in 25 years, and it was not meant to be supported by public monies. Claimed Mr. Shoctor, "Once it is in operation,

the theatre company will be entirely self-supporting." 19 It is evident that, in spite of the attempt to eschew massive public funding, the Citadel has very much relied upon public support. When, for example, the new Citadel complex was opened in 1978, it was with considerable state support -- one million dollars from the Secretary of State, and three and a half million dollars from other government sources. 20

Another sense in which the Citadel followed the regional theatre model was in its choice of artistic personnel: its first directors were indeed foreign, although they were not British or British-trained; they were Americans. Perhaps this is a reflection of the fact that Mr. Shoctor himself was (and is) a great admirer of American theatre in general, and a frequent patron of the New York theatre in particular. The first artistic director was John W. Hulbert, formerly chairman of "the Allegheny Department of Drama." 21 The first production was of the then-controversial Albee drama, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. It garnered critical praise from the *Edmonton Journal*'s reviewer, although the predominance of Americans working on the production did not escape the notice of Victor Mitchell, of the drama division at the University of Calgary, who noted that "it was a shame... that the staff was imported, Americans all." 22

Mr. Hulbert did not last long as the Artistic Director of the Citadel, and was replaced the next season

by Robert Glenn, who had been trained at the Dallas Little Theatre, and had worked in Dallas, Houston, St. Louis, and Atlanta. Mr. Glenn admitted that he did not know "too much about the development of theatre across the country," having seen only one other Canadian theatre. 23

In the intervening years, the theatre has been directed by Sean Mulcahy (Irish), followed by John Neville, Peter Coe, and Gordon MacDougall (all English). Indeed the Citadel battled actively against the Canadian cultural nationalists: after searching for a new Artistic Director to replace John Neville for the 1978-79 season, the Citadel hired Peter Coe. The theatre was publicly criticized by the Canadian Actors' Equity Association, which in an open letter opined:

> ...at this stage in the development of the Citadel and the development of Canadian theatre in general, the post ought to have been given to a Canadian resident. 24

Shoctor counterattacked with the charge that Equity was an "arrogant" central Canadian institution who had no business dictating policy to a Western organization. 25

He was supported in a series of editorials in the *Edmonton Journal*, one a surprisingly overt expression of cultural colonialism:

> A group of self-interested people, mostly in Toronto, want to forbid Edmonton's Citadel Theatre from seeking staff in other countries. To hell with them. 26

Responding to this charge, John Juliani, whose "Savage God" experiments had been moved from Vancouver to

Edmonton, wrote an impassioned open letter to the *Edmonton Journal*, which was later published in its entirety by the *Canadian Theatre Review*. "Is it arrogance," he pleaded,

> ...to suggest that we have come of age and no longer need to be chaperoned in the creation and maintenance of our own tradition --a task, which, surely, we are best qualified, by birth and background, to undertake? Is it? 27

Arrogance or not, it was, it seems, too much to ask. The Citadel has steadfastly sought its artistic directors elsewhere, evidently in pursuit of a policy that the best theatre directors cannot be home grown, and that it is in the interest of Edmontonians to have their plays interpreted for them by men from abroad, which since the appointment of John Neville, has meant men from England. In recent years, however, with the extremely mixed critical and audience reaction to the work of Gordon McDougall, its last Artistic Director, the Citadel has dealt with the problem in a novel fashion, and hired no one at all. This has left a sort of artistic vacuum: evidently Mr. Shoctor no longer feels that his theatre requires the guidance of a theatre professional of any stripe, English or otherwise. The significance of this has not escaped the notice of at least one critic:

> Certainly the appearance of conservative elitist theatre with essentially social functions is a fact of cultural evolution anywhere. The most successful example of that process is Edmonton's Citadel, founded in 1965 and still dominated by executive producer Joseph Shoctor. A millionaire impresario, Shoctor is a cultural czar with immense public, private, and corporate

> funds at his disposal. His new, glittering three-stage theatre complex is the envy of regionals everywhere. Shoctor has at least one innovation to his credit --from 1980 to 1984 he dispensed with an artistic director, selecting plays and personnel on an individual basis in his capacity as producer. This role was a natural outgrowth of the tendency at his theatre --and to some extent at most other regionals-- towards socially approved entertainment which would increase fundraising and audiences at the expense of artistic vision. 28

III. A CRISIS IN THE FIRST STREAM.

On a Sunday afternoon of April, 1974, a meeting was held in the offices of the Ontario Arts Council in Toronto. It was attended by the Board of Directors of the Stratford Festival. The meeting had been requested by a number of Canadian theatre directors subsequent to the hiring of Robin Phillips from England. They presented a manifesto, which had been drafted by Robertson Davies, both to the Board and to the press. It read, in part:

> We have asked for this meeting because of our concern for the future of the theatre in Canada, and our conviction that the Stratford Festival must play a dominant role in that future. In the broadest terms, we ask what your long-range plan is for the Festival, and what steps you hope to take to integrate it with Canadian theatre.
>
> When Stratford was founded it began a new era in Canadian theatre, and we have benefitted from its enterprise and courage. Now, it appears that the theatre that we represent is taking one direction, and Stratford another. During the past twenty-five years theatre in Canada has advanced in a direction that Stratford does not reflect. Canadian theatre is now working consistently to present world theatre in Canadian terms, to reveal a truly Candian sensibility, and to advance, under the

> best circumstances at its command, Canadian plays, and the work of theatre artists in every field. The time has come when we have a right to expect leadership from your theatre, which is the national theatre of our country whether it accepts that title and the accompanying burdens or whether it does not. Your theatre receives the largest public subsidy of any theatre in Canada, and we think the time has come for some public statement as to its function, and its plans for fulfilling that function. 29

The hiring of Phillips went ahead as planned, although, to Phillips' credit, he wished strongly to respond to the concerns raised in this manifesto. However, the contradiction that Davies saw between Stratford's position as Canada's flagship theatre and its failure to promote a Canadian world view on its stages, was one that would continue to haunt the Festival and the other first stream theatres.

When the Canada Council first began to fund producing organizations, there was both an implicit assumption that sooner or later, indigenous drama would grow along with these theatres, and an explicit mandate to provide support for the playwrights:

> The policy was usually one of making a grant to a theater company which money enabled that group to select an author, pay him something for writing the play and use the rest for special production costs in connection with staging the play. 30

The actual number of plays funded over the years 1957-1963 was sixteen.

By the end of the 1960's, not a few Canadians had begun to notice that the theatre in other countries was very dependent upon a national dramatic literature. Tyrone Guthrie had voiced the need for native writing. It was apparent that the Swedes could boast Strindberg, the Norwegians Ibsen, the Germans Goethe, Schiller, Büchner, Wedekind, and in the post-war years, Brecht. The Americans, having long since cut their political and cultural ties with Great Britain, had had for half a century a thriving dramatic literature which was lauded, cherished, widely performed in the commercial theatre and often transferred to the mass media of film and television. By contrast, in Canada, our most prestigious theatre was devoted to the work of Shakespeare, and our large, well-funded regional theatres consecrated whole seasons to plays from the classical repetoire and to newer plays from abroad. If Canada was ever to have a truly national theatre, it must develop a national dramatic literature.

> By 1967...it had become apparent that Canada had a theatre in its midst... The only question existing by this time though, was one of identity: most of the theatre being produced in Canada was clearly not Canadian. That is to say, it was not a theatre of Canada but merely one which existed in Canada. The element that was obviously missing was the playwright, the writer who could speak clearly, firmly, and intelligently in a native voice. 31

The Canada Council, for its part, realized the importance of this dearth of Canadian writing. In 1971,

after a study of seven regional theatres in the years between 1965 and 1971 had revealed that of 108 plays produced only 19 were Canadian, the Council organized a conference in the Gaspé. The result of the conference was the Gaspé Manifesto which recommended that

> ...the grant-giving agencies make it a policy that the theatres they support become Canadian in content [and] that such theatres be required to achieve a fifty-percent Canadian content (one play in two) no later than January 1973. 32

Even at a time when the building of a regional theatre system was a high priority, the writing of plays must have seemed like a penurious occupation, and worse, one with little hope that one's work would be produced and disseminated.

> There... existed a vicious circle in which a lack of opportunities to present plays discouraged good writers from writing for theater and did not allow the embryo writer an opportunity to learn the craft: this then justified the existing theater companies in being reluctant to produce original plays because there were so few of merit available that the financial risk was too great. 33

Whether or not Canadian plays lacked merit or involved an insurmountable financial risk was a central question to be contended between writers and theatre organizations over the years during which the second stream movement was gaining ground. In general, the first stream organizations were not making the kind of commitment to Canadian drama that would allow the writers to prove their merit. Some writers saw in this failure of

commitment a subsidization of colonial culture. In a 1974 paper, published under the auspices of the Council for an Independent Canada, Tom Hendry pointed out that

> ...approximately 80-90 per cent of all Canada Council subsidies to theatre in English Canada have gone to theatres presenting on their meain sages only ONE Canadian play (Playhouse Theatre Company, Theatre Calgary, Citadel Theatre, St. Lawrence Centre and Manitoba Theatre Centre) or NO Canadian plays whatsoever (National Arts Centre, Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Rainbow Stage, Centaur Theatre, Neptune Theatre, Theatre New Brunswick, Bastion Theatre, Saidye Bronfman Centre, Newfoundland Arts Centre). 34

A notable exception to this tendency was the 1967 Vancouver Playhouse production of George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*: it was a highly successful Canadian play at one of Canada's major theatres. In the optimistic celebration of Canada's centennial year, perhaps it seemed very natural, to a new generation of Canadian theatre people, that the next logical step in the life of Canada's proud new regional theatres was for them to become nurturing homes for Canadian plays. This was not to be the case.

In reality, Canada's regional theatres have proven inhospitable to the playwright. Neither the Stratford Festival (which described itself as Canada's "national" theatre until a storm of protest broke over this mis-nomenclature) nor the Shaw Festival have evinced much interest in or put much effort into the creation of new work. There was a short-lived "workshop" program at

Stratford in the late 1970s, supervised by Urjo Kareda under the aegis of Robin Phillips. The most successful experiment was Shelden Rosen's *Ned and Jack*, in the 1978 season on the Third Stage, and remounted at the Avon in 1979. What is revealing is a comment by Phillips, when explaining what he felt was a drawback in having Canadian work at Stratford:

> The pressure on new Canadian works at Stratford is more than can humanly be expected of them--simply because they are surrounded by classics, by Shakespeare, Congreve, Wilde, and Chekhov. 35

The sentiment here expressed begs the question of why Canadian plays should feel this "pressure." The question is, pressure from whom? Why should Canadian plays *not* be under pressure? The pressure to achieve excellence applies no less to Canadian writers than it did to any of the authors of the classics Phillips lists. One cannot refrain from pointing out the irony of the fact that, of the authors Phillips uses as examples of great playwrights who stand in contrast to the Canadian playwrights he assumes to be unequal to the "pressure" of being produced at Stratford, Ontario, all were without exception produced by their own contemporaries. Nor are all their plays, without exception, classics. Shakespeare and Chekhov, at least, had theatre companies devoted, albeit not exclusively, to production of their works. Implicit in this quote is that Canadian writing is understood to be inferior, almost by definition.

In spite of Phillips' evident good intentions, the workshop program actually produced few new plays, and none of any lasting theatrical life in Canada. For despite what Phillips and Kareda might have thought between them about the importance of this project, its execution was relegated almost entirely to the Third Stage. Phillips might have found "deplorable" the "tendency to equate the Third Stage with the third rate," 36 but what is certainly true is that only two Canadian plays have ever been found "first rate" enough to grace the Stratford Festival Stage, those being Donald Jack's *The Canvas Barricade* (1961) and James Reaney's *Colours in the Dark* (1967).

Manitoba Theatre Centre, for its part, had a brief flirtation in the early 1970s under Keith Turnbull, with an experimental season in its Warehouse space. The consequences were less than fortunate for Turnbull, who left the company before the end of the 1972 season, accompanied by his General Manager and his Director of Publicity. His attempt to broaden and Canadianize the standard fare at the Manitoba Theatre Centre's Warehouse space had evidently not impressed the theatre's Board of Directors.

> Turnbull, when he left the Manitoba Theatre Centre, was replaced by one of the Theatre's former artistic directors, Edward Gilbert who, in his first two seasons back in Winnipeg failed to produce a single Canadian script... 37

As of the early 1970's, Canadian writers were showing more and more of an interest in the theatre. The

Playwright's Co-op had been founded, and its members included Tom Hendry, Martin Kinch, Carol Bolt, Jack Gray, John Palmer, Len Peterson and Daryl Sharp. 38

According to Rubin, in "both the 1971-72 and 1972-73 seasons in Canada, more than 200 new Canadian plays received full-scale productions. 39 Full-scale productions they may have had, but according to Tom Hendry, they were inexpensive ones:

> This paper also recognises that only a very tiny percentage of the grants have gone to those few theatres presenting 50 per cent or more Candadian plays as part of their seasons. Between them Factory Theatre Lab, Theatre Passe-Muraille, Tarragon Theatre and Le Theatre d'aujourd'hui have presented more than 30 of the 50 Canadian plays to be done last season [1971-72], thanks to aggregate amounts of Council subsidies not exceeding in total $35,000.

Hendry goes on to point out, not without irony, that

> ...four theatres committed to the production of Canadian work have received, on the average, a per-play subsidy of approximately $1,000. Contrast this with the situation of 32 theatres not committed to the production of Canadian work, many of them producing *no* Canadian work whatsoever; these fortunate 32 theatres have reveived more than $1,950,000 for their 148 productions --a per-play subsidy of more than $13,000. 40

In any case, it seemed that the burden for the production of new Canadian plays was not going to be undertaken by the first stream theatres. Between the opening of the Stratford Festival and the end of the 1970s, Canada developed not only a theatre, it developed a national dramatic literature, but it was clear by the early 1970s that if a new drama was going to be realized

in this country, it was going to be realized at new theatres, which owed little to those already established as first stream.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE.

1. Robertson Davies, Foreword to *First Stage: The Making of the Stratford Festival*, by Tom Patterson and Allan Gould (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), pp. xiv-xv.
2. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, *English Candian Theatre* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 52.
3. Tyrone Guthrie, "Is Canada Ready for Big Time Theatre?" *Mayfair*, October, 1953, p. 28.
4. Edward Gilbert,"MTC: A Personal View" in *Canadian Theatre Review* #4 (fall 1974), p. 25.
5. See Appendix 1.
6. Jack Grey, "The Performing Arts and Government Policy," in Wagner, p. 28.
7. Walter Leslie Whittaker, *The Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Its Origins, Formation, Operation, and Influence Upon Theatre in Canada, 1957-1963.* University of Michigan, Ph.D. speech. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1965), p. 252.
8. The Canada Council Annual Report, to March, 1958, p. 15.
9. Whittaker, p. 256.
10. The Canada Council Annual Report, 1961-62, p. 4.
11. Ibid. pp. 21-22.
12. Nathan Cohen, notes from a lecture given at York University, Toronto, on Dec. 2, 1969, cited in *Creeping Towards a Culture; the Theatre in English Canada since 1945*, by Don Rubin, (Guelph, Ontario: Alive Press Ltd., 1974), p. 10.
13. Whittaker, p. 303.
14. Brian Brennan, "The Praire Provinces," in Wagner, p. 165.
15. Whittaker, pp. 323-324.
16. Mark Czarnecki, "The Regional Theatre System," in Wagner, p. 36.
17. The Canada Council Annual Report, 1966-67, p. 20.
18. Ibid. p. 22.
19. Joseph Shoctor, quoted in the *Edmonton Journal*, Thursday, September 2, 1965.
20. E. Ross Stuart, *The History of Prairie Theatre*, Canadian Theatre History, No. 2, (Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1984), p. 213.
21. Victor Mitchell, quoted in the *Edmonton Journal*, November 5th, 1965.
22. Ibid.
23. Stuart, p. 209.
24. *Edmonton Journal* editorial, "Something Rotten", Nov. 30th, 1977, p. A4.
25. By couching his argument in these terms, Shoctor was allying himself with anti-Eastern sentiments that ran high during the 1970s. It is ironic that Shoctor

should have claimed that the Citadel was in some way defending Western Canadian Culture, when judging by the predominantly foreign content of the Citadel's offerings, his theatre has been most consistent in keeping Western Canadian writing at the bottom of its priorities.

26. Edmonton Journal, editorial, "Something Rotten".
27. John Juliani, "The Coe Report (II)," *Canadian Theatre Review* 18, p. 13.
28. Czarnecki, p. 44.
29. Robertson Davies, cited in Martin Knelman, *A Stratford Tempest*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), p. 24.
30. Whittaker, pp. 311-312.
31. Rubin, p. 29.
32. Cited in Benson and Conolly, p. 83.
33. Whittaker, p. 315.
34. Tom Hendry, "Theatre in Canada: a Reluctant Citizen," in Abraham Rotstein and Gary Lax, *Getting It Back: a program for Canadian Independence*, (Toronto, Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1974), p. 267.
35. Cited in John Pettigrew and Jamie Portman, *Stratford: The First Thirty Years*, vol. ii: 1968-1982. Forward by Robertson Davies, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1985), p. 146.
36. Ibid, p. 146
37. Rubin, p. 24.
38. Ibid., p. 27.
39. Ibid., p. 28.
40. Hendry, p. 267.

CHAPTER TWO

I. THE BIRTH OF SECOND STREAM THEATRE IN CANADA.

One of the Canada Council's many accomplishments was the establishment of

> ...a tradition of using public money in support of theater... and while doing so the Council had gained the confidence of both the average citizen and the theater artist. In addition, a system of support had operated in which the organization had to earn the right to be given aid, and in which standards had to be maintained and a firm program carried out in order to merit a further grant; these were incentives which stimulated the whole theater movement. 1

Just who had the right to be given aid, and what those standards were to be, were hotly-debated points during the 1970s.

The 1960s had seen a first great period of growth in the Canadian theatre. It was clear at least to the writers of the 1966-67 Annual Report the Canada Council that

> ...if there is not yet a clearly identifiable Canadian Theatre, there is certainly a Canadian Theatre Community. 2

However, the largest and best-equipped theatres in the country, which had received the largest share of the Council's funding for the real production of plays, without which playwrights can neither learn nor develop their craft, failed during the 1950s and 1960s to stimulate the growth of a national dramatic literature by risking the production of Canadian plays. This was sadly

dramatized in the Vancouver Playhouse controversy over George Ryga's Captives of the Faceless Drummer, which had been commissioned from Ryga by the Playhouse. However, its highly critical view of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's measures during the October crisis of 1970 made it a controversial piece. When the board of the Playhouse withdrew its support for the play's production, David Gardner resigned as Artistic Director of the theatre, and Ryga himself was left so embittered that he warned of

> ...the rise of what I call "beggar's theatre"--productions of Canadian drama under impossible conditions in garages, church basements, etc. led by dedicated, well-meaning people who failed to see the significance of what they were embarking on -- the dangerous possibility that what we might call Canadian theatre might from its inception be a crippled, pathetic exercise in futility. 3

While it is by no means sure that Canadian drama has been beggared in quite the sense that Ryga warned against, it seems that by the end of the turbulent 1960s, and into the 1970s, first stream theatres had become the purveyors of a level of bourgeois dramatic product during a period when Canadian writers were concerning themselves with more pressing, socially-oriented themes, and the result was that the first stream theatres, and those cultural nationalists who were the most active and vocal supporters of native drama, formed themselves into separate and opposing camps. The result was that the country's best theatre facilities isolated themselves to a large extent

from a vital movement: the creation of a truly Canadian theatre. As Ryga put it so passionately,

> A viable national theatre must strive for nothing less than a vanguard position of national ideas and international humanism. 4

The late 1960s and early 1970s ushered in the next wave of growth, as a vanguard of theatricians in English-speaking Canada spontaneously began to work towards that position of, if not international humanism, at least national ideas. Their efforts were recognized by the Canada Council, which in the 1970-1971 season supported thirty-seven theatre companies across the country. The Council's Annual Report for that year acknowledged that it was the new, smaller companies that were supporting the playwrights:

> While the 20 resident regional theatres and festivals remain the backbone of Canadian theatre, and the organizations most capable of consistently mature prodection standards, their dominance has been challenged by a number of new, small urban theatre groups. These... represent the ideals of the "counterculture", and some have claimed the field of original Canadian playwriting and "collective creations" as their own. There are signs of a shift of emphasis in theatrical expression and it is likely that the more established companies will both be reminded of the dangers of inflexibility and exhilarated by the fresh spirit of competition. 5

Thus the second stream theatres found themselves strongly allied with a movement of cultural nationalism which made the promotion of new Canadian plays an important priority.

> In Canada, alternate companies set themselves up in protest against the "colonial" attitudes of the directors of regional theatres; it was felt the regionals offered no scope for growth or development to Canadian playwrights, and were unwilling to risk any departure from the forms of production tried and tested elsewhere.... The promotion of young playwrights and original productions constituted a focal point, much as the Vietnam war provided a rallying point for the American radical theatre. 6

Furthermore, it seems that the process of formation for these small theatres was to be a largely informal one, taking place self-consciously outside the usual bounds of the cultural elite:

> Young playwrights denied any sort of heritage worth the name, have begun to create a Canadian repertoire which, at its best, is both highly entertaining, edifying and instructive. Cut off from the large, heavily-subsidized theatres and festivals, the playwrights responded by organizing theatres themselves, often in conjunction with their friends. 7

Two separate but related developments occurred during this period. These were the opening of theatres devoted to new Canadian writing, and the resurgence of the method of collective creation as a dramaturgical technique.

The earliest, and to date longest-lived of these alternate theatres was Toronto Workshop Productions, co-founded in 1961 by George Luscombe, and directed by him until 1988. TWP also became the home of resident writer Jack Winter, and guests such as Len Peterson and Rick Salutin. 8

Luscombe, inspired by Brecht and having worked under Joan Littlewood, pioneered the technique of collective creation in Canada. This was to become a highly significant method in Canadian theatre. Collective creation was the mainstay of Theatre Passe Muraille, and theatres across the country from the Mulgrave Road Co-op in Nova Scotia, to 25th Street House in Saskatoon, from Catalyst Theatre and Theatre Network on the prairies, to Tamanhous Theatre in Vancouver have all had at least some measure of success with collectively-created plays. The technique of collective creation brought actors, directors, technicians, and designers together creatively. The resulting plays were by definition new work that was indisputably Canadian. The collective process also meant exposure to the writing process for non-writers, and exposure to the theatre for writers who had previously been ignorant of how to exploit the theatre's particular communicative strengths. Writers were brought into the theatre as dramaturges in the collective process, or as collaborators, and literally taught how to use the theatre. James Reaney, whose *Colours in the Dark* had been one of the two Canadian plays ever presented on the Festival stage at Stratford, worked with directors Michael Mawson and Keith Turnbull at the Neptune Theatre, and had his trilogy about the Donnellys presented at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre. He also collaborated with Turnbull at NDWT Theatre (NDWT being an acronym for either "The Ne'er

Do Well Theatricians" or "The Ne'er Do Well Thespians," depending on who you talk to); Rex Deverell became writer-in-residence at Regina's Globe Theatre. In 1977, Rudy Wiebe and the Theatre Passe Muraille company collaborated on *As Far as the Eye Can See*, produced at Edmonton's Theatre 3. This was, according to Diane Bessai, because of the direct invervention of Frank Moher, who later in the 1970s was Northern Light Theatre's first writer-in-residence. Alan Filewod has argued that the significance of collective creation in the history of the Canadian theatre lies in its finding a direct link with a popular audience:

> When combined with the populist desire to define local subjects, collective creation became more than a passing theatrical fad; it was the key which for the first time enabled Canadian artists to define indigenous theatre in terms of a popular audience rather than an educated elite. 9

That collective creation was the *first* link between popular audience and indigenous theatre seems to be true, remembering, for example, the wide social range of the audiences that attended and thoroughly enjoyed *Paper Wheat*. Some of these people might never have attended a first stream theatre like the Citadel. They might have been intimidated by its very aura of high culture. As Vancouver director Michael Puttonen has succinctly put it, "they wouldn't know how to buy a ticket."

However, Filewod's emphasis on the audience obscures the importance of the fact that collective creation was

filling a void in dramatic writing. Popular audiences have proven more than willing to come to the theatre when offered an opportunity to see plays which speak to them in their own voice. When, for example, Maurice Podbrey invited David Fennario to Montreal's Centaur Theatre to observe and learn after reading Fennario's first published work, "Without a Parachute," Fennario rewarded this astute move by becoming a voice for Montreal's English-speaking working class with such plays as *On the Job*, *Balconville*, and *Moving Day*,. These plays, particularly *Balconville*, were popular hits in the normal as well as the political sense of the term "popular." The learning of the craft of theatre by talented and perceptive writers lagged behind the impulse to make theatre in this country, precisely because the writers needed a theatrical outlet, and no exegesis of the genesis of collective creations can overlook this.

While writers were learning about the theatre, a great many Canadian actors have learned to write, and have made significant contributions to the nation's dramatic literature, including Linda Griffiths (*Maggie and Pierre*, *O.D.'d on Paradise*), Maurice Panych in Vancouver (*Last Call*), Eric Peterson (who is listed for authorship, along with John Gray, in *Billy Bishop Goes to War*), and the present author (*Life After Hockey*).

In the early 1970s in Toronto, the playwrights were to get a further boost by two new writer-oriented

theatres: Ken Gass's Factory Theatre Lab (1970), dubbed by director Ken Gass "The Home of the Canadian Playwright." The Factory began life with

> ...a series of playwriting contests, followed by a workshop program. Gass' policy proved highly successful: within a year, eight full-length plays and nine one-acters had been produced; within four years, an anthology of representative Factory Lab productions was in print; with ten years, Factory Theatre had premiered fifty new Canadian plays, and many other small theatres were following its lead. 10

Factory Theatre Lab produced premieres of many George F. Walker plays. The Tarragon Theatre opened under Bill Glassco's direction in the autumn of 1971 with a ready-made hit production of David Freeman's *Creeps*. In its first few seasons, Tarragon produced plays by Reaney and (in translation) Michel Tremblay (*Hosanna* and *Forever Yours, Mary Lou.*) These playwrights contributed to Canadian drama significant plays in the naturalistic form. 11 When *Creeps* and *Leaving Home* were produced during the 1971-72 theatre season in Toronto, they were part of a flurry of theatrical activity that Urjo Kareda described as

> ...a span of theatrical activity during which, creatively, all hell had broken loose. A common subconscious barrier had somehow been lifted, releasing forces which transformed our theatrical character. In the course of that season, there were no less than four theatres constantly offering original Canadian works in Toronto: Theatre Passe-Muraille, Factory Theatre Lab, Tarragon Theatre, and arriving for the summer, Toronto Free Theatre. When one adds the occasional Canadian works presented at Toronto Workshop Productions and the Global Village, assorted independent productions, the performances of

> the travelling Creation 2 ensemble, and even the two Canadian works at the St. Lawrence Centre (picked more by publicity than by conscience, but no matter), the total climbed to well over fifty -- over fifty new Canadian plays received full premiere productions in Toronto during that magic launching year. 12

Kareda stresses the importance of naturalism when he notes that

> If indeed this interesting season was an unconsious, formal re-enactment of the development of contemporary theatre, then those playwrights who began at the beginning -- with naturalism -- were the winners. Is it coincidence that the most fully satisfying, the most finished new plays of the season were all naturalistic in technique: David Freeman's *Creeps*, Bill Fruet's *Wedding in White*, Larry Kardish's *Brussels Sprouts*, and David French's *Leaving Home*? 13

Although naturalism has been superseded by other forms, the naturalist plays which made such an impact on the Toronto theatre scene in the early 1970s mark a great stride forward in our national theatre. In their turn, the theatres which gave their respective work a first production have continued to flourish and to produce the work of such eminences as Sharon Pollock, Judith Thompson, James Reaney, and George F. Walker.

Another significant event was the opening of The Toronto Free Theatre in 1972. Literally "free" (i.e., not charging admission) at first, this old warehouse space has become one of the most substantial theatre organizations on the Toronto scene, and has given Toronto premieres to such talents as Martin Kinch (*Me?*), Anne Chislett (*Quiet in the Land*), Carol Bolt (*Gabe, Red Emma*), Erika Ritter

(*The Splits*), David Fennario (*On the Job*), and Paul Gross (*Dead of Winter*).

The most important theatre to come out of this period in Toronto, at least from a national perspective, was Theatre Passe Muraille:

> The spiritual and perhaps symbolic grandfather of the movement -- certainly for Eastern Canada-- was probably Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille... a company founded in 1968 at the experimental Rochdale College by James Garrard.... [When] ...Garrard left the company.. it was his second-in-command, Paul Thompson, who turned Passe Muraille from simply an experimental house into a Canadian experimental house. Of the 50 or so productions done at Passe Muraille between 1970 and 1973, about 90 per cent were new plays by new writers from various parts of the country." 14

Not only did Thompson and company create and nurture many high-profile (*The Farm Show*) and controversial (*I Love You, Baby Blue*) works, they also, through their seed program, spread their influence across the country, in such prairie theatres as 25th Street House in Saskatoon and Theatre Network in Edmonton. Their techniques of collective creation, as well as the historical perspective that informed much of their work, inspired a whole genre of Canadian theatre which included *Les Maudits Anglaises; 1837: The Farmers' Revolt; As Far as the Eye Can See; Les Canadiens; Billy Bishop Goes to War; The West Show*; and *Maggie and Pierre*. *Paper Wheat*, the collective creation by Saskatoon's 25th Street House Theatre that was to win national attention, was created according to principles introduced during a residency at 25th Street House by

Theatre Passe Muraille. Diane Bessai has commented that the 25th Street House troupe "learned much from Passe Muraille during its residence in Saskatoon during the creation of *The West Show*." 15

> As the seventies progressed Paul Thompson's Theatre Passe Muraille developed the improvised collective documentary to a state of brilliance. Such was the Toronto troupe's influence that the term 'collective documentary' now seems synonymous with Theatre Passe Muraille. A whole decade of actors has grown up who have adopted Passe Muraille techniques of reportage and character representation. 16

The techniques of collective creation, under the guiding influence of Paul Thompson (whom Rubin might be justified in calling the godfather of Canadian nationalist theatre) have been an important inspiration for a whole generation of Canadian writers, actors, and directors, for not only did Passe Muraille create plays, it created playmakers. Actors that worked as part of the early Passe Muraille company include Janet Amos, Eric Peterson, Linda Griffiths, Ted Johns, Paula Jardine, Clare Coulter, David Fox, and Gary Reineke. Together, they are part of the who's who of the Canadian theatre. Janet Amos has gone on to direct both the Blyth Festival and Theatre New Brunswick. Eric Peterson, who co-created *Billy Bishop Goes to War* and is now an actor much in demand on stage and as a television star. Linda Griffiths wrote (with Paul Thompson) *Maggie and Pierre*, and has since written other plays, the most successful being *O.D. on Paradise*. Ted Johns continues to write plays on his farm near Blyth,

Ontario; Paula Jardine has created a series of intriguing "public dreams" in Edmonton, and Clare Coulter, David Fox, and Gary Reineke are all highly respected across the county as fine actors.

II. SECOND STREAM IN EDMONTON: A PRAIRIE PERSPECTIVE.

Concurrent with these developments, and in some sense dependent upon them, was the rise of a second stream theatre movement in Edmonton, whose Citadel Theatre was until 1971 the only professional theatre company in the city. At the same time that the Tarragon was opening its doors in Toronto, Edmontonians Mark Schoenberg and Anne Green were plotting an alternative in Edmonton to the hegemony of the Citadel, and in 1971 they opened Theatre 3, which was certainly devoted to a more experimental production style, although it is interesting to note that Schoenberg, an ex-patriate New Yorker, did not subscribe to a specifically Canadian mandate. In the first issue of the *Canadian Theatre Review*, he wrote:

> It seems to me that the real concern should not be over whether or not what we do is "Canadian" --but rather, over whether or not what we do is any good. 17

There were others in Edmonton who did not share this point of view. In the basement of Garneau United Church, Isabel Foord had organized a group of young actors which in early 1972 became the Edmonton Experimental Theatre,

which produced, in addition to one of Foord's own plays, two collective creations. Although this company was short-lived (their only funding was through the temporary Opportunities for Youth program), they laid groundwork for later companies by the political orientation of their work and their use of the collective method. Shortly afterward, Northern Light Theatre opened its doors as a lunch-hour venue, and before the end of the decade, Edmonton had given birth to Catalyst Theatre, Phoenix Theatre, Theatre Network, and Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre, all of which have produced works by local authors, and the latter two of which have dedicated themselves to the production Canadian plays. 18 In addition, Chinook Theatre, a theatre for young audiences, had moved to Edmonton in 1980, and opened its doors to plays by Canadian authors and specifically to local Edmonton playwrights like Brian Paisley, Ti Hallas, James DeFelice, and the present author.

For Westerners, participating in Canadian culture was not at all synonymous with producing plays which had already proven their value in Toronto. There was in the West, along with a growing sense of autonomy and economic might that accompanied the economic boom of the 1970s, a strong sense of regional pride that tended to exclude Eastern Canada. An all-too-popular bumper sticker which was to be seen on Alberta streets in the mid-seventies read "Let Those Eastern Bastards Freeze in the Dark." It

gave unfortunate expression to a sense of grievance about economic disparities between Central Canada and the West. The grievance was not wholly without basis. In terms of federal cultural funding at least, Central Canada swallowed the lion's share. From 1957, its inaugural year, the Canada Council

> ... made a special point of trying to woo Quebec, but it had to give more or less equal treatment to Ontario to avoid an outburst of the historic Upper-Lower Canada rivalry. This meant that, particularly in the performing arts, the hinterland provinces of the Maritimes and the west were systematically starved of funds in order to feed the two central provinces. Quebec and Ontario between them contain just over 60 per cent of the Canadian population; they have received about 75 per cent of the performing arts grants. 19

In the theatre, this anti-Eastern feeling had both negative and positive repercussions. Edmonton did not see a professional production of *Of the Fields, Lately* until 1978, when Workshop West presented the play, winning a critics' circle award. Workshop West also co-prudced (with Catalyst Theatre) David Freeman's *Creeps*. On the other hand, there were those in the West who rejected Eastern influences precisely because they felt it more important to assert Western cultural autonomy.

Those who defended the function of the regional theatres as purveyors of international standards included critics like Keith Ashwell, who defended the Citadel's hiring of Peter Coe; and Jamie Portman, who wrote in the *Calgary Herald*, defending the role of the regionals, that

"...the present function remains an eminently justifiable one." 20

George Melnyk, a founder of Newest Press, objected on the other hand to Eastern works not because they were bad, but because they were simply another kind of colonialism on a different scale. In a rather bitter article in the *Canadian Theatre Review*, he expressed his sense of outrage that Easterner Paul Thompson should have the temerity to come out to the West with a creation like *The West Show*. Nor did he believe that the regional theatre system was advancing the cause of western Canadian culture: "It seems to me," he wrote,

> ...that the main bulwark supporting Canada's colonial mentality is the institution of the "regional theatre" and its mandate to provide general theatre to general audiences.

He also resisted the mere replacement in the seasons of Western regional theatres of some American or British plays by a Eastern Canadian plays of questionable merit.

> Westerners must be willing to by-pass the whole regional theatre structure as it now exists. A first step would be a well-funded touring company operating only in the West and only doing Western material. Forcing us to do Canadian plays from other regions before we have a grasp of our own culture is a dead loss. 21

In fact, first stream theatres in Alberta, have not shown much inclination to produce central Canadian plays. A major proponent of these plays has been Workshop West, which has had success with productions of *Balconville* and

Hosanna, in addition to the productions mentioned above. Since 1986, the excellent work of George F. Walker seems to be making inroads. His trilogy of "Power" plays have each been produced in Edmonton by different companies, over the past three seasons.

Writing from a Western perspective, Diane Bessai pointed out in a 1984 article that so-called alternate theatres (here categorized as second stream theatres) had been, over the decade previous to her article,

> ...taking the initial risks of bringing forward such playwrights as David French, David Freeman, Michel Tremblay (in translation), Rick Salutin, Joanna M. Glass and others. But the plays were also travelling, not only to alternate theatres, but even to the mainstream houses, although usually on their second stages (the latter a contentious issue to some). Very occasionally the large theatres would take on a premiere main-stage: in 1977 Manitoba Theatre Centre commissioned *The Last Chalice* from Joanna Glass; in 1979, the Citadel premiered Sharon Pollock's *One Tiger to a Hill*. Theatre Calgary, which has usually worn its mainstream pretensions more lightly than MTC and the Citadel, had earlier commissioned Pollock's *Walsh* (1973) and in 1975 premiered W.O. Mitchell's successful *Back to Beulah*: it has continued to encourage new work to the degree that it now surpasses ATP. 22

The productions that Bessai lists certainly represent victories for the playwrights, but they are the exceptions rather than the norm. And since the second stream theatres are constantly at a loss for resources, it is little wonder that, typically, plays at second stream theatres have small casts and small budgets.

III. THE SECOND STREAM AS ESTABLISHMENT: OSSIFICATION.

By the end of the 1970s, the second stream theatres had proven themselves, but this new-found stability had a cautionary note. Alan Filewod, writing in 1978, had already argued that

> There is no reason why the seasons of both the Citadel and Theatre 3 are not interchangeable with any comparable theatre in Canada --they share many of the same actors, and do similar plays in a similar style. True, these theatres are involved with their host-communities, through the boards of directors, workshop programs, and school tours, but this involvement is expected in any medium-sized business. 23

Indeed, the "business" of Canadian theatre had become an economic force. In 1975, *Canada on Stage* listed twenty alternate theatres in Toronto, as Renate Usmiani points out, and with

> ...the government freeze of 1978, a gradual decline set in, as well as a noticeable change in attitude: companies had to adopt a more commercial viewpoint in order to survive. Also, by the end of the decade, several of the "alternative" theatres had become successful enough to attract a "mainstream" audience and thus lost some of their rebellious and experimental thrust. Many did not survive. Others, like the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, became fully mainstream: the Tarragon now presents only the works of well-established Canadian writers.... Ken Gass is probably correct when he suggests that "alternate" (with reference to Toronto, anyway) should be considered a historical term, applicable essentially to the decade 1969-1979. 24

Indeed, by the time of this writing, it is questionable whether the terms "mainstream" and

"alternate" have any meaning at all in this context. In a recent essay, Filewod has observed a vital ambiguity about what is meant by "alternate" theatre in Canada. He points out that in the early years of the Toronto alternate theatre movement, the theatre was

> ...consciously radical, its politics and much of its repertoire informed by the American experience. It described itself as "experimental," appropriating that term to mean iconoclastic...

but that by 1972

> ...the alternate theatre was very different: it was nationalistic --detractors called it xenophobic-- and it expressed its nationalism in a rediscovery of self. This was the theatre of collective creations and documentaries that articulated the Canadian voice, and of kitchen-sink naturalism that returned a distinctly Canadian gaze.... This was a theatre of cultural reclamation and postcolonial consolidation which sought to express its difference from the American experience that had originally informed it. 25

Filewod therefore sees a basic contradiction in that "the alternative theatre appropriated the aesthetics of the 'international' avant-garde as a means of expressing its difference and autonomy." Thus arose a confusion of alternative aethetics with alternative politics which established "a myth of the alternate theatre at odds with the facts." 26

Filewod's point is a valuable one, for it is important to fix what is meant by term "alternate." A good deal of critical writing about the Canadian theatre of the past twenty years has used the adjective "alternate" to describe second stream theatres, but it is

questionable whether the label "alternate" can still be meaningfully applied to those second stream theatres which have become permanent parts of the theatrical landscape. Certainly, they are no longer part of a wider counter-cultural or political movement, and what is perhaps more disturbing is that the second stream seems to have retreated from those experiments with theatre aethetics that informed the early Passe Muraille collective creations and the attempts to push the formal boundaries of the theatre that were characteristics of the Mummers or of the early work of Tamanhous Theatre in Vancouver.

By the late 1970s the many second stream theatres which had been founded in a growing spirit of cultural nationalism and in reaction against the colonial mentality which dominated the first stream theatres had themselves become well-established. Theatre Passe Muraille had opened a second stage, Tarragon Theatre was a nationally respected institution, and Factory Theatre Lab's playwright development program had produced no less a talent than George F. Walker, who in addition to making a strong impact on the Canadian theatre, had attracted the kudos of Joseph Papp in New York. The Toronto Free Theatre, whose original old warehouse space had been in drafty disrepair, had been renovated, and now had a very respectable space with a main and a second stage, a comfortable lobby, and a suite of administrative offices. In western Canada, second stream theatre was on a very

solid footing. 25th Street House in Saskatoon, Alberta Theatre Projects in Calgary, Northern Light Theatre in Edmonton, the Arts Club Theatre and Tamanhous Theatre in Vancouver were examples of mid-size organizations who had (or had access to) good theatre facilities, strong administrative structures, and could hire personnel from a pool of talent that had been trained, perhaps at the National Theatre School, or in one of several Canadian universities that offered intensive training in theatre and drama.

There were more and more signs that the demarcation between first and second stream theatres was becoming less and less distinct:

> As if to emphasize the institutionalization of the alternate theatres, Urjo Kareda -the critic who had been so supportive of the alternates- became literary manager at the Stratford Festival in 1975, and in the same year Bill Glassco... was engaged to direct Robert Patrick's Kennedy's Children at the Festival, the alternate theatre's *bete noir*.... 27

That emphasis on cultural nationalism which had been so important in the early growth of the second stream was less relevant as the 1970s wore on. It is true that second stream theatres are responsible for the tremendous growth in the number of Candian plays. Indeed, the most readily identifiable contribution of the second stream to the Candian theatre is its fostering of a national drama. By the end of the 1970s, cultural nationalism was no longer a contentious issue, is was an established fact.

If one applies the criterion of how politically engaged is the work produced by the first or the second stream, one finds perhaps less difference than one might expect. David Fennario's *Balconville*, a very class-conscious play by a self-proclaimed Marxist, has been performed at theatres as distinctly second stream as Workshop West in Edmonton, and as poshly first stream as the Place des Arts in Montreal and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. The Shaw Festival, nearly an archetype of a first stream Canadian theatre, produced an adaptation of a George Orwell's *1984* in that year, and the Citadel has produced work with a strong socially critical content in Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident* and the powerful anti-fascist play *Mephisto*.

Indeed, some second stream theatre directors have a conscious ambition to work in the first stream where access to larger budgets can allow them greater artistic scope. Gerry Potter, whose Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre is one of Canada's most stalwartly nationalistic theatres, once told me that he wanted to do Brecht's *Galileo* as his first production at the Citadel.

There is of course nothing inherently wrong with this. As artists mature, they should have the opportunity to work on larger canvasses. What is curious is that, since the early 1970s, which saw the first successful examples of Canadian naturalism and which also saw the growth of the phenomenon of collective creation, second

stream Canadian theatre has not developed particular styles. This is hardly surprising in the case of the first stream, given their broad mandate to produce "general theatre for general audiences," but the second stream has not appropriated for itself an aesthetic. It can be argued that we have seen the rise of a kind of documentary approach to the theatre in collective creations like *The Farm Show* and *Paper Wheat*. Writers have even used the documentary voice in plays like Rick Salutin's *Les Canadiens* and *1837: The Farmer's Revolt*, or Raymond Storey's *Something in the Wind*. During the 1980s however, the documentary style has been seen less, and the practice of collective creation has been largely abandoned, even by Theatre Passe Muraille, whose mandate since Paul Thompson's departure has shifted toward the production of new scripts.

Another development of the 1980s is that both first and second stream theatres select their seasons from a rather narrow range of plays. In the 1983 edition of *Canada On Stage* one might pick out at random the season of Theatre Calgary for 1981-82, which included fifteen plays, nine of which, refreshingly, were Canadian works. Comparing that season with others across the country is revealing. Of the fifteen plays, only two, John Murrell's *Memoir* and *Farther West*, were not performed elsewhere at another theatre in Canada during the same season. Of the Canadian plays, two were performed at two other theatres,

two at three other theatres, one at four other theatres, and one, Allan Stratton's farce *Nurse Jane Goes to Hawaii*, was performed at no less than nine other theatres in Canada. Of the six foreign plays produced, which included four English and two American plays, one was produced at one other theatre, two at two other theatres, one at three other theatres, and two --*The Elephant Man* and *Private Lives*-- at four other theatres.

Furthermore, this random sample reveals a crossover between the work produced at the first stream regional theatres and the second stream theatres. For example, the most popular three plays --*Nurse Jane Goes to Hawaii*, *The Elephant Man*, and *Private Lives*-- were performed with about equal frequency at first and second stream theatres. What is disturbing about this tendency is that theatres dissimilar in history, budget, and appealing to different audiences even in different regions of English Canada seem to share the same type of season.

Brian Brennan made a similar observation about the uniformity of play selection in a 1987 article about theatre in Alberta, pointing out how Calgary's theatres first and second stream theatres (and even a third-stream theatre, in the case of Loose Moose Theatre) seemed to be competing to produce the same plays:

> [In the 1981-82 theatre season]...Alberta Theatre Projects and Theatre Calgary included Tom Kempinski's *Duet For One* on their long lists for the next season. (Only ATP actually produced it.) Theatre Calgary had to abandon plans to stage *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It*

> *All For You* when Lunchbox Theatre jumped in with a one-act version of the controversial Chrisopher Durang comedy. And Glenmore Dinner Theatre had to cancel a planned production of Bernard Slade's *Tribute* with little-known local actors when the larger Stage West dinner-theatre chain hired former pop-music star David Cassidy to star in its big-budget version of the hit Broadway comedy...
>
> Since that time, ATP and Stage West have tussled over the performance rights to *Noises Off*.... Loose Moose Theatre has produced *The Gin Game* in the wake of Theatre Calgary's decision to relinquish the rights. ATP has done *Playing the Fool* following Theatre Calgary's announcement of the play as a possibility of its own season. And Theatre Calgary has stolen some of ATP's thunder by producing Ted Johns' *Country Hearts* after ATP expressed an interest in stage the small-cast Canadian musical during the Calgary Stampede. And still the theatres say they are not competing.
>
> In the meantime, all the Calgary theatres are actively seeking a bigger share of the recession-battered dollar (box office projections are based on what they call "increasing market share," i.e. stealing audiences from one another, rather than going after the uninitiated).... 28

What seems to emerge from all this is that the second stream theatres are not defining themselves by a different kind of artistic contribution. They are only newer, and smaller. If anything, the first stream theatres are appropriating the best work, and workers, from the second stream. Playwrights like John Gray and Linda Griffiths, long identified with the second stream, have their work produced at first stream theatres. The 1988 Edmonton presentation of George F. Walker's *Nothing Sacred*, directed by Bill Glassco, which toured nationally, did not originiate at Factory Theatre Lab or at the Tarragon Theatre but at the National Arts Centre. It played on the

Shoctor stage, a laudable step forward for the Citadel's management. This is a seemingly natural upward movement, as those who have striven long on the often unrewarding ground of the second stream are finally accepted into the greener pastures of first stream theatre, but it is not without its ironies:

> The extent of the broadening of the mandates of both alternate and civic theatres is graphically illustrated by two Toronto openings in May 1986: Rogers' and Hart's Broadway musical *Pal Joey* at Tarragon (directed by Vancouver alternate theatre stalwart Larry Lillo, and starring Stratford regular Martha Henry), and a new play by George Walker, *Better Living*, at CentreStage -a remarkable reversal of the normal artistic focus of these two companies.... To cap it all, it was announced in February 1987 that CentreStage will merge with Toronto Free Theatre, one of the city's earliest alternates, to form a new company, the goal of which, said Glassco and the Free's artistic director Guy Sprung, "is to create a theatre which bridges the gap between the small 'alternative' theatres which have fostered most of the new Canadian drama of the past twenty years, and the larger, more traditional 'regional' and festival theatres whose repertoires mainly consist of classics and contemporary plays from other countries. 29

Whereas in the earlier battle for legitimacy the second stream movement had claimed for itself the moral ground of nurturing Canadian drama, the more conservative first stream theatres had held, as it were, the aesthetic high ground of being the guardians of high culture. By the beginning of the 1980s, both the first and the second stream could claim for themselves some sort of aesthetic legitimacy. They now claimed for themselves a kind of social legitimacy, under the rubric of a self-defined

professionalism. In the next chapter, I shall argue that this very professionalism is a defensive position which serves in part to isolate those theatres from the upward pressure of a new third stream which is struggling to carry the creative torch for the Canadian theatre in a climate of economic austerity greater than any which faced the proponents of the second stream twenty years ago.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Whittaker, p. 232.
2. The Canada Council, *Annual Report*, 1966-67, p. 20.
3. George Ryga, "Theatre in Canada: A Viewpoint On Its Development and Future," *Canadian Theatre Review* 1 (winter, 1974): p. 30.
4. Ibid., p. 21.
5. The Canada Council, *Annual Report* 1970-71.
6. Rubin, p. 49.
7. Hendry, p. 268.
8. Usmiani, p. 50.
9. Alan Filewod, *Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 185.
10. Usmiani, p. 53.
11. Freeman's *Creeps* was originally intended as a completely naturalistic piece, according to a lecture by Don Rubin in 1971 at York University. The expressionistic devices in the play were an addition of the play's first director, Ken Gass.
12. Urjo Kareda, introduction to *Leaving Home*, by David French. New Drama 7, General Ed. Brian Parker (Don Mills, Ontario: General Publishing Co., 1972), p. v.
13. Ibid., pp. vii-viii.
14. Rubin, p. 19.
15. Diane Bessai, from the introduction to *Showing West; Three Prairie Docu-Dramas*. Prairie Play Series 5 (Edmonton: New West Press, 1982), p. 9.
16. Rex Deverell, introduction to *Medicare!*, in *Showing West; Three Prairie Docu-Dramas*. Prairie Play Series 5 (Edmonton: New West Press, 1982), p. 176.
17. Mark Schoenberg: "Edmonton" *Canadian Theatre Review*, 1 (winter, 1974): p. 121.
18. At Workshop West, Gerry Potter has also given a theatrical forum to writers from other media: Myrna Kostash, a documentary writer, produced *1986* for Workshop West, and Henry Kreisel's novel *The Rich Man* was successfully adapted in the 1987-88 season.
19. George Woodcock, *Strange Befellows: The State and the Arts in Canada* (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1985), p. 92.
20. Jamie Portman, "Calgary," *Canadian Theatre Review* 1, (winter, 1974): p. 120.
21. George Melnyk, "Western Nationalism," *Canadian Theatre Review* 5 (winter, 1975), pp. 139-140.
22. Diane Bessai, "The Protean Shapes of Prairie Theatre" *NeWest Review*, vol.10, no. 2 (October 1984), p. 4.
23. Alan Filewod, "Assuming Too Much in the Regional System." *Canadian Theatre Review* 17 (Winter, 1978), p. 11.
24. Renate Usmiani, *Second Stage: The Alternative Theatre Movement in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), pp. 28-29.

25. Alan Filewod, "Erasing Historical Difference: The Alternative Orthodoxy in Canadian Theatre," *Canadian Theatre Review* 58 (Spring, 1989), p. 206.
26. Ibid., p. 207.
27. Benson and Conolly, p. 104.
28. Brian Brennan, "Carte Blanche: Theatre Wars," *Canadian Theatre Review* 51 (summer, 1987), p. 66.
29. Benson and Conolly, p. 104

CHAPTER THREE

> But a national theatre, a full-bodied, dynamic theatre of people for people, is not going to happen in English-speaking Canada until we clear our heads and move forcefully beyond the outer limits of restriction imposed by the funding agencies through the proliferation of theatrical charlatans and economically-vested boards of directors. We have been trapped 40 years behind actual history.
> -George Ryga 1

I. STRUCTURAL FORCES OPERATING AGAINST A VITAL THEATRE

I have attempted to establish in the previous two chapters how the first and second stream movements have contributed to our national theatrical history, and suggested how they have become dissociated from the fresh creative thrust that gave them birth. In the case of the first stream, I have suggested that its dissociation arose from its non-participation in the creation of a Canadian dramatic literature. This is a problem that the first stream has addressed during the past dozen years by bringing both Canadian plays, and Canadian theatricians, into its theatres.

The reasons for the second stream's ossification are less clear. Some might argue the second stream is in fact quite healthy, with a large number of theatre organizations devoted to the production of a wide variety of plays from the Candian and international repetoire. I believe, however, that the second stream is in fact in a state of retrenchment due to certain economic and

structural forces, which tend to mitigate against a fresh and vital body of work. In this chapter, I shall attempt to show some of those forces, and I shall begin with what I believe is the crucial issue of money. Indeed, the relation of the third stream to its sources of funding and its administrative structures is what sets it apart from the previous two movements.

Since it is important to understand some of the historical structures that have become ingrained, it is necessary to begin with a view of the situation that confronted those theatre artists who began the second stream.

Many of the second stream theatres emerged in the highly charged atmosphere of the late sixties. Theatre Passe Muraille had been born in the radical Rochdale college in Toronto. The Sixties counter-culture had informed theatrical endeavour in the same way it had informed education, ecological consciousness, and the anti-Vietnam War movement. The very antimaterialism of the late sixties and early seventies that moved young Canadians to travel freely across the country, and to seek new experiences and forms (not all of them legal or officially sanctioned), also removed social constraints which might mitigate against aspiring young actors or playwrights working in such a marginal occupation as theatre. There was a whole generation of baby-boom children filled with idealism, and willing to work for

little remuneration on projects which engaged their deepest interest.

A great many theatres had been supported by two programs that had been set up by the Trudeau Liberals: Opportunites for Youth, and the Local Initiatives Program. These low-paying programs were alternate sources of arts funding that were significant for two reasons. First, they provided a considerable volume of state support for the theatre. This is evident in the 1972 Opportunities For Youth report published by the office of the Secretary of State, which lists no fewer than seventy-one projects across the country which were specifically related to the performance of theatre, or theatrical activities such as mime theatre. Furthermore, they supported projects which had a theatrical underpinning, like The Playwright's Co-op in Toronto, which was to evolve into the Playwright's Union of Canada. 2 Second, these grants were independent of a specifically cultural mandate like that of the Canada Council, and provided money to companies without attaching their support to a set of prior artistic standards. Effectively, this meant that companies which had no status as members of the cultural elite could get funds to carry on their work.

> Major funding for the native Canadian theatre has come from sources such as Opportunities for Youth and the Local Initiatives Program or the Department of Manpower and Immigration. When one considers the lack of elite involvement in

> each of these programs, one begins to understand why they so quickly became an alternative to the arts councils for the playwrights and their colleagues. 3

Hendry made this point in the context of a discussion about how little money the Canada Council was allotting to those theatres which actually produced Canadian plays, especially in proportion to its comparatively massive support for the first stream theatres. It is little wonder that the proponents of the second stream seized upon this new source of funding.

> ...the quite phenomenal growth of smaller theatres that has taken place was to a large degree sparked by two emergency work programs of the federal government: Opportunities For Youth (OFY), and the later Local Initiatives Program (LIP), were extensively and imaginatively used by young people (and some not so young) to start theatres of every kind. Many of them continue to flourish today. The problem with such government programs, of course, as with so much of the ad hoc cultural activity in which Canada has engaged, is that projects are started but the resources to develop and maintain activities are not provided in later years. 4

Indeed, in George Woodcock's analysis, the existence of these alternate sources of funding actually forced the Canada Council to intitiate one of its most innovative programs:

> The presence of LIP and OFY forced the Canada Council to modify the emphasis on professionalism which dominated its major grants programs, and in 1971, under pressure from the secretary of state's office, it made at least a token gesture towards the Sunday

> artist and the amateur scholar by initiating the Canadian Horizons program which two years later became known as Explorations and which, for all its limitations, has certainly proved useful in fostering creative projects and eccentric talents that do not fit into the professional pattern. 5

Woodcock evidently believes that the pressure from the OFY and LIP programs forced the council to re-evaluate its policies, and to make available funds for non-professionals. I believe that it was in part this very pressure which made necessary the tremendous emphasis on professionalism which has been part of the dialgue of the Canadian theatre scene since the death of OFY and LIP.

> The Canada Council was not capable of filling the funding void left by the drying-up of the Opportunities for Youth program and the Local Initiatives Program. This is hardly surprising, given the sheer volume of theatre work that was crying out for subsidy. During the period from 1967 to 1976, for example, the Council's support for professional performing arts organizations grew from $2.9 million to $17.7 million. 6

Indeed, with the burden of cultural funding falling so heavily upon the Council, it could hardly be anything but a matter of policy to allow those organizations which did not demonstrate their tenacity to expire, and the policy by the middle of the 1970s was to support only those theatre organizations which had been in existence for at least two years and which could demonstrate a certain level of audience loyalty. Public

funds had to be accounted for, and the Council had to weigh carefully its expenditures on behalf of the public. Some sort of standards were called for.

The concept of professionalism took strong hold during this decade. First, there was pressure on theatres to justify their professional status to the Canada Council, since the Council gave operating grants to theatres with professional status. Second, the theatres sought to define themselves in a way which would defend their own legitimacy at a time when the public generosity of the Trudeau years began to be perceived as improvident, if not financially wasteful.

Two organizations that came to prominence during the seventies were the Canadian Actors' Equity Association (widely known as Equity, and which also represented directors and stage managers) and the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT). Equity, for its part, not only bargained for the interests of its members; it also regulated itself, basing entrance into the Association on a certain standard of professionalism.

At the same time the theatres themselves were banding into their own association, complementing Equity's position as the bargaining organization for management, and as the omnibus advocacy group for professional theatres across Canada. Since most theatre directors were also members of Equity, the two associations have a great deal of crossover of personnel.

It is a fair irony to say that, where PACT finds itself involved in labour negotiations with Equity, management is in a sense negotiating with itself.

There has been a homogenizing trend in this need for theatres to define themselves according to these standards. As a natural consequence, one can observe certain similarities between those organizations which partake of the same structures, and which validate themselves by reference to similar standards.

Structurally, there is little difference between the second and the first stream. They share several essential elements. They maintain sizeable budgets which depend on a large measure of state support; they support permanent administrative staffs under the artistic leadership of a single Artistic Director; and they report to boards of directors which have ultimate financial responsibility for the organization.

In the case of the budget, it is true that second stream theatres have smaller budgets and more limited physical facilities, but even a relatively modest operation like Edmonton's Workshop West Playwright's Theatre commands a budget of over two hundred thousand dollars a year. This theatre is typical of most second stream organizations, in that revenue comes from ticket sales, corporate and private donations, fundraising activities like bingos and community events, and from the three levels of government. Of all sources of funding,

the latter is perhaps the most critical, in that there is some measure of guarantee that it is going to be repeated from year to year, and the ongoing business of the theatre depends upon this surety.

What also significant in this regard is that the state support, particularly from the federal and provincial sources, is dependent upon some system of jurying. The Canada Council in particular establishes certain criteria, including artistic criteria, which a theatre must meet in order to receive funding. Similarly, provincial arts funding bodies like the Ontario Arts Council and Alberta Culture make funding decisions based on a value judgment on the artistic quality of the theatre's work. Naturally, the problem with state support is that, in George Woodcock's words,

> ...where planned subsidy exists, obviously the framework of a national organization of the arts emerges, and the mere selection of the theatrical or musical groups that will be supported by the state --or the Canada Council or other such body as its representative-- will establish the criteria on which patronage is based. Nothing so crude as an overt censorship need ever be tried. The power to influence what is performed will be there, even if it is not exercised, and that is one of the most important reasons why not even the slightest tinge of political influence should enter into the process. 7

This is not to suggest that the Canada Council or any or the provincial cultural equivalents are in fact pernicious elements which consciously restrict the range of theatrical activity in state-supported theatres. If

anything, the evidence suggests that only with intensive intervention by the state can Canadian theatre survive at all. That is not the issue here. What is important is that state funding agencies like the Canada Council set artistic standards, a process which does not take place in the third stream. In fact, third stream theatres have had to seek new sources of funding, since the traditional sources --the Canada Council and provincial agencies like the Ontario Arts Council and Alberta Culture-- find their resources stretched in order to meet the growing demand from first and second stream organizations. In Alberta, two such sources of funding are the Alberta Foudation for the Performing Arts and the government's Summer Temporary Employment Program, which provides a percentage of the wages paid to temporary employees. The small wages paid by this latter program, and the fact that the money cannot be used for anything other than wages, recalls the days of the Local Initiatives Project and the Opportunity for Youth program.

One should further draw attention to another element that is common to first and second stream theatres, the predominace of the position of Artistic Director. Most theatres are run along a very similar model. They are administrative structures set up to support an artistic mandate whose main interpreter is an Artistic Director. It is up to this director to realize the mandate of the theatre by choosing the plays that will form the

theatre's season, and then to hire the actors, designers, musicians, stage managers, and in the case of companies that can afford it, guest directors who will carry out the artistic work. Often, in the case of younger organizations, the Artistic Director is the person who founded the theatre, the person whose particular artistic vision has become a focal point for the energies of a group of people. George Luscombe at Toronto Workshop Productions, Bill Glassco at Tarragon Theatre, are examples of people who founded second stream theatres along a certain philosophy or artistic vision. Many of the older second stream founders, like Ken Gass, Glassco, or Mark Schoenberg (who co-founded Edmonton's Theatre 3) have since moved on to other endeavors, making room for newer, younger faces.

This pattern of Artistic Directorship is now virtually universal in English Canada. This may be because the theatre, being so essentially a collective art form, needs a certain degree of artistic focus. Analagous to the earlier British tradition of the actor-manager, English Canadian theatre has come under the artistic management of the Artistic Director, a man or woman whose vision defines a particular theatre's role. Characteristically, these Artistic Directors hold the position for a several years, in some cases for the entire life of the theatre, as is the situation with Gerry Potter, who except for a year's sabbatical has been

the only Artistic Director of Workshop West. Under this arrangement, the Artistic Director is a permanent paid artistic employee of the company, in many cases the only one. The administrative staff is permanent, and might include a general manager, a publicist, and a secretary. The technical director of the theatre might also be a permanent employee, although this is commonly the case only with those second stream theatres which occupy their own theatre space. Some theatres, like Edmonton's Northern Light Theatre and Theatre Network, have with the help of funding agencies made provision in their budget for a writer-in-residence.

This organizational arrangement has several implications. The first is that the position of Artistic Director is the critical one, for not only does he or she make the critical artistic decisions and hire the personnel who are to execute them, his or hers is the only ongoing artistic position, and the artistic policy thus becomes identified with a single individual. Second, it means that the actors, the designers, and the stage managers are hired on a per-contract basis. A standard Equity contract at such a theatre seldom exceeds six weeks in length, and normally covers only a single play. Such personnel can make only a limited contribution to the artistic vision of the theatre. Third, it is then difficult to work collaboratively, much less collectively, where a play develops and changes over

a period of weeks, or is kept in repertory, during which it might develop over months or even years.

Second stream theatres are generally structured in a way that makes the Artistic Director responsible to a Board of Directors. In Alberta, for example, the Societies Act states that every non-profit charitable organization (which is what nearly every theatre in the province is) must have a Board of Directors consisting of at least five members. In such structures, it is the Board which is ultimately responsible for the financial well-being of the theatre, and thus the financial responsibility rests with those who are at some remove from the ongoing operation of the theatre company. Since the expenses of a theatre company necessarily precede ticket sales, which are a theatre's primary source of self-generated revenue, deficit financing is common practice, and there is a natural tension between the artistic needs of the theatre and the tendency of theatre's board to avoid incurring an ever-increasing deficit. One of the methods of doing so is by selling advance subscriptions to the public, usually at a lower rate than the per-play rate during the season.

The notion of subscription sales was originally introduced to Canada when a marketing consultant from the Chicago Lyric Opera suggested it to the Canada Council in 1965, and which the Council subsequently passed on to the regional theatres. [8] There are drawbacks to the

subscription season. First, by locking the season into a schedule, it prevents the theatre from holding over successfull plays. As Mark Czarnecki points out;

> ...the loss is not just economic, since both theatre artists and their audiences are also denied the opportunity to support and applaud a successful cultural endeavour. The result is that economic hedging curtails a community's potential to take pride in and enjoy its own work. 9

The preplanning of seasons furthermore implies a less spontaneous creative process. When an Artistic Director plans a season, he must take account of what actors, designers, musicians and technicians are available for particular time slots. Normally, there is some consideration given toward the appropriate seasonal nature of the plays, particularly about what might make a good Christmas offering. The plays have to be budgeted, and the budgets must be submitted for the Board's approval. This very process tends to objectify the creative impulse of the theatre. The director is in fact attempting to schedule a series of collaborations on paper in hopes that the particular chemistry is going to work once the season is under way.

Another source of funds is corporate sponsorhip, both for the theatre's overall activities, and for each individual play. Corporate funding is becoming a more and more important part of the theatre funding mosiac. According to Canada Council statistics, private sector funding for all theatre rose between 1972-1983 from 3 per

cent to 9 per cent. For small theatres (those with budgets of less than $100,000 in constant 1971 dollars) private funding has risen from 1 per cent to 11 percent. 10 But corporate sector funds tend to be granted to those theatres which have the largest public profile, and it was true at least up until 1968 that the theatre

> ...obtains, as a percentage of expenditures, by far the lowest level of financial assistance from the private sector. 11

Czarnecki believes that this is because theatre is more likely than other performing arts to present social challenges that the corporate sector would sooner not support:

> A non-verbal art like music, which does not potentially deal in ideas, or any vision which might challenge the social or economic status quo, is obviously going to draw funding from organizations with a vested interest in maintaining that status quo. 12

Whatever other sources of revenue the theatre has managed to generate, it is unfortunately true that in general, small theatre in Canada has earned a smaller and smaller percentage of its revenue from the box office. In 1972, small theatres (those with expenditures less than 100,000 1971 dollars) were earning 65 per cent of their own revenue. By 1983, that figure had fallen to 35 per cent, a rather drastic drop in earnings which makes the Canada Council's earlier policy of supporting theatres until they could establish self-sufficiency seem

naive. Indeed, government funding for these theatres has drastically increased from 28 per cent to 51 per cent. 13 Thus, while theatres once known as "alternate" have grown tremendously both in the number of theatres and the total amount of money that they spend, they have relied more strongly on public sources of funding, and less strongly on the support of their audiences.

For a time in the early days of Canada's fledgling alternate theatre movement in Toronto, "alternative" might have referred either to radical aesthetics or radical politics. By the mid 1970's the hardheaded refusal of more established instututions (that is to say, the first stream theatres) to produce Canadian playwrights had resulted in such a nationalist backlash that any theatre with a nationalist program or mandate could fairly describe itself as "alternate."

Indeed, there is by now such a confusion of terms that any Canadian theatre which is not a strictly commercial operation such as the Stage West chain, or any theatre which does not devote itself exclusively to the works of foreign playwrights produced in some kind of proven style can claim that it has some kind of alternate status.

Indeed, even theatres like Ottawa's Great Canadian Theatre Company and Edmonton's Catalyst Theatre, both of which identify themselves with a left-wing, progressive political mandate are financially supported by such state

agencies as the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and Alberta Culture respectively, and the cities of Ottawa and Edmonton. In addition, Catalyst has also been heavily supported by the Alberta Alchohol and Drug Abuse Commission, a sub-governmental agency. With shows like *Mind Your Own Body* and *Feeling Yes, Feeling No*, plays for children about child abuse, Catalyst Theatre becomes not so much a left-wing theatre as an arm of social policy.

Since second stream theatres now share similar sources of funding, and similar structures, with the first stream, it seems inappropriate to me therefore to apply the term "alternate" to second stream Canadian theatre. These economic and structural elements, which are shared by first and second stream theatres, operate less in the newer theatre companies that have come lately into being and do not depend on ongoing subsidy, corporate grants, or upon successfully subscribing patrons. These theatres, Canada's third stream, operate on a more informal basis, and are thus free, like the generation of theatres which comprised the second stream a generation ago, to concentrate on theatre.

II. NEW DIRECTIONS.

The third stream has several constituents. The oldest is that which, like its second stream predecessor, began in Toronto, where the high volume of theatre activity in the 1970s created its own fringe. The

companies that are part of this element of the third stream are companies like the Necessary Angel Theatre Company, Buddies in Bad Times, Nightwoood Theatre, Autumn Leaf, and Actor's Lab. They are now sufficiently numerous and well-organized to have their own advocacy group, the Toronto Theatre Alliance. However, it is not with this Toronto-centred element of the third stream that I wish to deal; it is with two other, slightly later developments which have a wider, more regional base.

If the 1970s were rung in for the second stream by the First Underground Theatre Festival of 1970, the beginning of the 1980s might have a symbol in two theatre festivals that happened in the spring of 1981. The first was the Toronto International Theatre Festival, a prestigious event which celebrated Toronto's hard-won place as a theatre city of some importance in the world. The second was a much smaller festival in Thunder Bay called the Bread and Puppets Theatre Festival. It was a largely Canadian festival, and involved groups like Kam Theatre Lab in Thunder Bay, the Mulgrave Road Co-op, Edmonton's Catalyst Theatre, as well as representatives from Caribbean countries and from a number of small Canadian groups who were interested in theatre with a more political stamp. After a week of plays, workshops, and meetings, a plenary session was held at which it was decided to hold the Festival every second year in a different Canadian city. It was decided to incorporate

the individual members, and the name Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance was coined. A manifesto was also drafted, and the members of the Alliance agreed on certain terms of the manifesto, the most critical ones being:

> We share a common belief that theatre is a means and not an end. We are theatres which work to effect social change.
>
> We see our task as an ongoing process in which art is actively involved in the changing nature of the communities in which we live and work.
>
> We particularly attempt to seek out, develop, and serve audiences whose social reality is not normally reflected on the Canadian stage. 14

The Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance, or Canpop, as it came to be known, did in fact succeed in organizing a series of festivals of popular theatre, held biannually in Edmonton ("Bread and Roses,", 1983), Winnipeg ("Bread and Dreams", 1985), Sydney, Nova Scotia ("Standin' the Gaff," 1987), and Guelph, Ontario ("Bread and Butter," 1989). The second, sponsored by Catalyst Theatre in Edmonton in 1983 attracted companies from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Ontario, and Quebec, as well as a large Edmonton contingent which included a production of the Robert Winslow play, *Prime Time Religion*. Stephen Bush's *Life on the Line*, and The Great Canadian Theatre Company's touring production of *Sandinista!* were highlights of that festival.

The Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance, although supported by some second stream organizations, is broadly based in the Canadian Theatre community, and was founded outside of the aegis of funding bodies like the Canada Council and the provincial arts granting organizations. There is little pressure on its members to produce plays, and the process of jurying is not particularly relevant to its activities. Consequently, the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance is not an important player in the Canadian theatrical scene but for this reason, it has avoided the kind of structural impediments which I have outlined above, and the Alliance can function as an information clearing house and a forum for the exchange of ideas among its members. One of the accomplishments of the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance is to have sustained an ongoing contact with theatricians from the developing world. There has been, for example, a steady interaction between Chris Brookes, formerly of the Mummers Troup, and theatre groups in Nicaraqua. Another accomplishment is that it has kept the notion of popular theatre, in the political sense, alive in an atmosphere of political retrenchment.

During the 1983 Bread and Roses Festival, another Edmonton festival was in its second incarnation, and was in fact running concurrently with it. Although at the time, it was not garnering a great deal of interest at the "Bread and Roses" festival, the "Return of the

Fringe" was attracting modest crowds to an event that was to become a yearly invigoration of the Canadian theatre scene.

III. THE EDMONTON FRINGE THEATRE EVENT.

In 1982, Edmonton's Chinook Theatre, a theatre for young audiences, was given a fifty-thousand-dollar grant from the City of Edmonton to set up a summer event with a theatrical focus. The first Edmonton Fringe Festival, called "The Fringe, a Theatre Event," took place that year in Edmonton's Old Strathcona district. Forty-five shows at five stages were attended, with ticket sales of approximately 7,500. For next year's event, "Return of the Fringe," ticket sales doubled, and the number of shows increased from forty-five to sixty-five, on seven stages. This growth rate was matched in 1984, at "The Fringe Strikes Again," and incredibly, once again at "Home on the Fringe" (1985), so that in that year, some hundred and twenty-five shows were performed for a total of six hundred performances at twelve stages for an attendance figure of sixty-six thousand. 5

By 1986, few people involved with the festival, with the possible exception of founder Brian Paisley, believed that attendance could double again, and yet it did, with an estimated 120,000 ticket sales for 140 performances at

thirteen stages. 15 The Fringe had become, in Paisley's words,

> ...a truly populist event and the size and demographics and potential of this live, and lively, theatre audience became a matter of great interest to government and business people as well as artists... 16

Brian Paisley's influence has dominated Edmonton Fringe Festival. Before becoming a national celebrity as its Producer (the Fringe does not have an Artistic Director), Paisley was co-founder and director, with Ti Hallas, of Chinook Theatre, which had been founded in Fort St. John, British Columbia. In 1980, the theatre had moved to Edmonton and established a modest but successful operation touring theatre for young audiences to Alberta schools.

When in 1982 Paisley founded the festival, it is doubtful that he had in mind the scale of success that the festival has achieved. Nonetheless, he did have some faith that the festival could fill an artistic void, a belief that was shared by some members of the media:

> ...the Fringe is offering Edmontonians the type of un-safe (*sic*), experimental and challenging theatre that the established companies are not prepared to offer or dare not offer in what is shaping up into a winter of some discontent in the entertainment industry.
>
> Whatever. The Fringe, if it continues in this vein for another week, can not be dismissed as the underskirt of legit entertainment in Edmonton. 17

Comparing the publicity for a certain show at the Fringe with the publicity for the Citadel's 1982-83 season, Dave Billington of the *Edmonton Sun* wrote:

> One approach to theatre is not qualitatively more important than the other, but a theatrical ambience which claims to be a full and rich one is seriously impoverished when it sacrifices one style for another.
>
> The Citadel style is a proven entity in Edmonton.
>
> This is the year when we find out if the alternate style has an equal validity here. 18

At least Paisley knew what his orientation and philosophy would be as festival Producer. He had in mind an event that was artistically open-ended. From the beginning, the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Event's organizational and administrative structure has remained consciously unobtrusive. Entry to the festival has always been an open matter: those who wish to mount a show can do so, provided that they pay their application fee and make their application before all performance slots at the Fringe are filled. This mechanism reflects the philosophy that, if the Fringe is to provide its audiences with the maximum exposure to the widest range of theatre, the festival must commit itself to including whatever material the artists wish to bring. While certain companies or individuals have been actively invited to come to the festival, Paisley has always seen new work as being a central focus of the festival.

Although Fringe organizers exercise no artistic censorhip over who can or cannot perform, Paisley says the Edmonton Fringe should always function as a "crucible for new, local plays." "We want to encourage new works... we've got to start from where we're at. It has to be our experience up there on the stage." 19

This kind of artistic free market system is at the centre of the Fringe's success. The festival provides venues equipped adequately but without any ostentation, technicians, and an administrative superstructure of Chinook staff, festival staff and numerous volunteers. It also provides a certain profile, and, very importantly, an atmosphere conducive to the kind of open-mindedness in which artistic experiments can take place: audiences at the festival tend to be more willing to risk seeing both new plays, and new production styles.

Most professional theatre artists in Canada have little choice when it comes to the kind of stage work they can do. Actors, writers, designers and directors are, for the majority of the year, at the behest of Artistic Directors or producers in charge of legitimate theatre institutions across the country. And, in turn, those individuals who lead the administration of regional or national theatres, non-profit or commercial, large or small, are subject to yearly jurying by funding bodies like the Canada Council and Alberta Culture. They are also forced by box office considerations to listen

carefully to what their audience demands. Thus the cutting edge of creativity in Canadaian theatre is blunted by the practical necessities of catering to a relatively secure market - the subscription season.

The very willingness of actors and directors to mount a Fringe show without the security of a paid rehearsal period, and without any guarantee of financial remuneration once the show is open has caused a certain amount of tension within the associations which represent theatre professionals. The guidelines under which a member of the Canadian Actors' Equity Association ("Equity") can perform have been formulated with a certain amount of rigidity over the past twenty years, and the Fringe situation is difficult to address within those guidelines.

According to the Equity guidelines, if the actor is not performing in a theatre recognized by Equity as a Member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, the actor is expected to obtain Equity's permission to do so, and if the work is paid, to work under a "Guest Artist" contract. The Fringe phenomenon confronts Equity with a situation in which actors are working without the usually required fees or safeguards, and furthermore, often working for *ad hoc* organizations that cannot be held accountable to the PACT agreement. Since there is a strong desire on the part of many association members to participate in Fringe shows,

Equity has found itself in the uneasy position of having to safeguard the rights of its members when they are in fact self-employed. This tension is well understood by Brian Paisley:

> Both Equity and ACTRA work under the premise that their artists are *hired* by a theatre, or a film production company, or a private radio or television station - in other words, their members are considered always to be *employees*, not employers. Of course there are many artists who are employers *and* members of either or both organizations, but, in general, Equity and ACTRA function as professional *unions*, negotiating contracts and determining secure working conditions for ther members.
>
> The risky Fringe system of artist-created productions is an anomaly in this well-structured world. Equity has always made allowances for the occasional theatre presentation done in a co-operative fashion, but the widespread popularity of the Fringe has created much debate among its membership.
>
> Local professionals strongly support the festival and its approach to letting artists take their own work direct to the public.... Until 1986, this apparently *western cavalier* approach was resisted by some of the more traditional eastern membership (*sic*)... 20

Arriving at some formula whereby its members can participate in the festival has been an ongoing task for Equity. However, since the it has become apparent that the Fringe has not only succeeded in Edmonton, but is inspiring other festivals in the West, Equity has had to come up with a policy for its members or risk losing any say in the matter at all. Having had the precedents of the Equity Showcase productions in Toronto and the agreement which the Association came to allowing actors in Vancouver to form actors' co-operatives, the

association finally arrived, by the 1988 festival, at the following policy:

> Please note that members may self-produce their own productions at the various Fringe Festivals by applying for and obtaining permission from C.A.E.A. Application forms for 1988 Fringe Festival productions are available from both offices. Completed application forms must be returned to Equity for approval *at least 30 days prior* to the opening date of the Fringe Festival. For further information, contact Business Representatives in the Toronto or Vancouver offices. 21

The tone of this directive from Equity, which demands that artists seek "permission" from Equity, suggests that Equity perceives a potential threat from the Fringe festivals. From my discussion with the Past President of the Edmonton local of Equity, it is clear that the Association's position is that the Fringe does indeed represent a threat to the status quo as evolved by the second stream over the past generation. 22 Whereas in the normal course of a first or second stream season, actors are paid for rehearsal, and have a number of safeguards against unfair employment practices in the Canadian Theatre Agreement to which both Equity and P.A.C.T are signatories, there are no such safeguards in the normal course of Fringe production. Also, the very popularity of the Fringe can be viewed as competition with traditional theatre seasons. Perhaps most important, Equity has debated the erosive effect of the Fringe movement on the hard-won security which theatricians in this country have always sought, and

continue to seek. One can imagine that such an event as the Fringe, which in no way falls within the kind of socialized safety net over which the second stream has been operating for a generation, represents a threat. The Fringe is the theatrical equivalent of a free market, and no performer in it has a guaranteed income.

> Artists should lead, not be led. The Fringe represents, perhaps for the first time in Canadian theatre, a large-scale attempt to give the stage back to the creative artist. Writers, directors, designers and actors can choose what *they* want to do and the festival administration will take care of all the basic techinical facilities, general publicity and audience amenities that are necessary to get *their* work in front of an audience. 23

The phrase, "the festival administration will take care of all the basic technical facilities, general publicity and audience amenities" is a telling one, for it expresses one way of seeing the festival. Whereas in the first and second streams, artists are hired by the theatres, which are *de facto* the artistic directors and the administrators, at the Fringe, the artists in a sense "hire," for their admission fee, the services of an administrative infrastructure and the use of a theatre space with basic equipment and the services of competent technicians. The traditional arrangement is turned completely on its head.

Another aspect of third stream theatre as it appears at the Edmonton Fringe Festival is that it breaks the pattern of Artistic Director-led theatre. Some third

stream theatres have Artistic Directors. Alan Edwards is the director of the Rough Theatre, as is Stuart Lemoine the Director of Teatro la Quindicina, and the present author of THEATrePUBLIC. In the latter two cases, it is worth noting, the directors are also the primary writers of the company, and Allan Edwards reports that he makes every effort to maintain a sense of collaboration with both his board and the artists with whom he works from play to play. 24 Indeed, since third stream theatres' resources and administrative structures are so marginal, the Director's position is an honourific more than an occupation; often the position is unpaid, and the Artistic Director is not supported by a permanent administration.

Many third stream theatres are actually based upon the writing of a single person, as is the case historically with Calgary's Maenad Productions (which was founded specifically to produce the work of Rose Scollard). Other third stream theatre companies are not led by a single director, as is the case with the English Suitcase Theatre Company, Free Food and Beer (a comedy group), Calgary's Maenad Productions, and with Edmonton's Small Change Theatre, who have continued the tradition of collective creation. Robert Astle, Jan Millar, and Jan Henderson share the acting, scripting, and directing tasks.

Small Change Theatre premiered their first collective, *One Beautiful Evening*, at the 1982 Fringe, and decided to continue as a company subsequent to the play's success there. 25 They have since aimed several productions at the festival audience, among them *Hazard and Darlene in Love (1983)*, and *One Beautiful Evening* (1986), and *The Bat's Secret* (1988). *Hazard and Darlene in Love* has toured internationally. One Yellow Rabbit, a Calgary collective which concentrates on non-naturalistic forms, has brought a show to every festival to date, and has begun to integrate its run at the Fringe into wider touring activity. This company, strongly identified with the Edmonton festival, has thrived with the festival along parallel lines, and has attained, over the past seven years, the stature of one of Calgary's important theatres.

Another important new company that has used the Fringe as a testing ground and an audience base for its shows is The Rough Theatre, directed by Allan Edwards. The Rough Theatre calls itself "Edmonton's political theatre." Their first production was a 1986 Fringe production of Howard Brenton's *Sore Throats*. They followed this with *Born in the R.S.A.* (a piece created collectively by Barny Simon and actors from The Market Theatre in Johannesburg) in 1987, and were so much in demand that they later toured Alberta with this overtly political play. The Rough Theatre mounted another South

African play the next year, *Shades of Brown*. The Rough Theatre works on a project-to-project basis, and Allan Edwards claims that the theatre is finding its own audience, and is remaining free to fulfill its own mandate by finding alternate sources of funding. Amnesty International is financing their 1989 production of Harold Pinter's *One for the Road*. "The fact that our mandate is political theatre has opened a lot of doors for us," he says. 26

A breakdown of Fringe productions reveals the preponderance of small groups or collectives formed solely for the purpose of Fringe production. Of 156 shows proposed in the 1989 Fringe calendar, 79 were local Edmonton or Edmonton area companies. Of those, 53 were groups which do not normally produce plays in the context of a local theatre season. This is not to say that these companies were comprised of non-professionals; professional participation in the Fringe is large, but it does indicate that people have seen an advantage to be reaped from de-centralized organizations that can operate flexibly in the context of the festival.

The Edmonton Fringe imposes certain limitations on, and challenges to, the artist, these having mostly to do with limitations of time and physical resources. With as little as three hours of technical rehearsal in the theatre space, and with changeover times between shows during the festival averaging an hour, the kind of

material that is most suited to Fringe production is that which is strongly based on writing and performance, rather than technical values. Moreover, the economic realities of the festival dictate that large-cast plays pay their participants less than small-cast plays. Further, since garnering an audience for a show depends on the power of the publicity received in the small article in the Fringe program, and in briefly-seen street publicity (the opening-day parade, handbills, posters), those shows which have some novel aspect which can be exploited for publicity are at an advantage.

Within these criteria, the 1985 THEATrePUBLIC production *Life After Hockey* has become a kind of model of a Fringe show. It is ideally suited to a simple staging. Its technical requirements, although important, are small, and easily achievable within the limitations of the festival. Furthermore, its most important spectacular effect, that of its being performed largely on roller skates, is performance-oriented. The fact that it is a one-man show meant potential profit for those involved with the original Fringe production, and its hockey theme provided an immediate novel interest for the press and public.

It is now clear that the Edmonton Fringe Festival is reaching the limits of physical growth at least, since Old Strathcona cannot hold many more people, and Edmonton's resources of theatre equipment are stretched

to their limit. If anything, there may be a sense amongst artists and audiences alike that the Fringe has grown too big, that the intimacy and community spirit of the event has been sacrificed to its phenomenal success.

It is my belief that the festival, and those in Vancouver and Winnipeg which are based on it, is successful precisely because its structure is perfectly suited to the needs of that group of theatre practitioners who constitute what I have called the third stream. The majority of theatricians who produce shows for the Fringe are those who stand on the outside of the first two streams of Canadian theatre; those who have either been excluded, or who have remained aloof by choice or taste. Among the former may be some who have tried to, but cannot gain admittance to either the first or second stream for reasons of artistic temperment, some because of a lack of experience, ability, or even raw talent. There are some who feel that the first and second stream theatres have ossified into administrative structures, or that the formal restrictions of English Canadian theatre are too confining. Maenad Productions is an example.

Founded in 1986 by Alexandria Patience, Dawn Davies, Sandra McNeill, Barbara Christopherson, and Rose Scollard, this company decided "to produce a play a year at the Fringe." 27 After some success with *Tango Noir* in 1988, the company has continued on an *ad hoc* basis until

the current 1989-90 season, during which they will present a season of three plays in Calgary. Alexandria Patience claims that her main reasons for helping to found the company were first that "very few female works were being produced in the mainstream theatres", second that "something about the structure [of first and second stream theatre] is rigid," and third, that she and her friends "wanted to get together and inspire one another." Their difficulty with getting grants was put colloquially but succinctly by Ms. Patience: "The grants people just want to know that you have an organization, an office." 28

Fringe shows are done largely, although by no means exclusively, by a younger group of artists than those who appear on other stages. The open atmosphere of the festival is conducive both to the spirit of rebellion, and to the untested. The very vivacity of these younger people contributes to the overall sense that something new and exciting is happening.

The Edmonton Fringe Festival has become an important national showcase for new talent. Playwrights like Stewart Lemoine, who won Toronto's Dora Mavor Moore Award for Best New Play in 1987 for *The Vile Governess*, and Terry Colp, whose work has been steadily improving, and who had a late-night hit at the 1988 festival with *Wicked, Wicked Wax Works*, are examples of writers whose work was first produced at the festival. Tom Creighton's

Millions of Canadians and *Three Vagabonds* have been produced beyond the Fringe, as have Lyle Victor Albert's *Ba-Ha-Ha* and *Cut!*. The present author's *Life After Hockey* has been reproduced many times translated and performed in French at Theatre Francais d'Edmonton and in German in Tubingen. All of the above-mentioned plays had their premiere at the Fringe, and at least the latter, *Life After Hockey*, was certainly intended as an occasional piece written specifically for the festival. It is also interesting to note that, as of the summer of 1989, *Life After Hockey* has been filmed for television, as has Tom Creighton's *Three Vagabonds*, and Victor Albert's *Ba Ha-Ha* is scheduled to go into television production soon.

There is no doubt that the Edmonton Fringe Festival has become a permanent fixture on the Canadian theatre scene. As long as the festival continues its open-door policy towards the artists, and as long as Edmontonians continue to provide a ready-made and enthusiastic audience for the performers, one can anticipate that the Fringe will continue to nurture and promote new works by Alberta writers as effectively as either the first or second stream theatres in the province. The nature of those plays however, is governed by the very restrictions that make the festival possible at all.

The theatre in Canada has never been in financial terms a particularly rewarding pursuit for the artists.

During the days of the Opportunities for Youth and Local Initiative Program grants, smaller theatre organizations could hire, albeit at low wages, a relatively large number of actors and perform plays with large casts. In the past decade, government spending on the theatre, nationally and provincially, has been consumed by now-established theatre organizations.

Yet it is clear that the Fringe is attracting artists who are doing some of the most interesting, challenging, and entertaining work in the country. This is precisely because it is giving the opportunity for many third stream artists who, either because they are avoiding artistic restriction, or because their work is too rough and unready, find it impossible to enter the first and second stream theatres. Edmonton's Fringe Theatre Event, along with the other Fringe festivals that are now being organized in major cities across the West, are in fact expressions of a whole generation's alienation with and from the artistic retrenchment of the 1980s.

Ken Gass resigned from the Factory Theatre Lab in 1979, ending his tenure as director of a theatre that had premiered a body of new work which represents some of the best Canadian dramatic writing ever produced. Renate Usmiani quotes him indirectly as suggesting that "the avant-garde of the future is to be found in the cabaret scene, rather than in the theatre" (29). Recalling some

of the work done at the Edmonton Fringe Festival in the past few years, Gass' prediction seems to be coming true. Among the more interesting shows have been *Trapped on a Lawnchair*, which explored personal and cultural themes through the medium of stand-up comedy, the work of Bob Bossin, which relies more heavily on music and anecdote than on the traditional notions of plot and character, and Allan Williams' *The King of America*, which dispensed with theatricality altogether in favour of pure storytelling. Williams has also toured widely with his *Cockroach Trilogy*, a piece in the same vein, and has worked as a dramaturge at the Manitoba Theatre Centre.

Canadian theatricians should pay heed also to the immense popularity of SAK Theatre's enjoyable experiments with audience participation. While not thematically deep, their shows offer a strong form of popular entertainment that could bear more serious thematic matter. Similarly, the rise in the popularity of street entertainment which seems to stem from a music hall lineage suggests a possible means of revitalizing a moribund season-oriented approach.

After the vast success of the 1989 Fringe Theatre Event, Brian Paisley and the administrators of the Fringe claimed that, without a much greater level of subsidy from the civic and provincial governments, it would be impossible to continue to produce the festival. While this may seem like an alarmist and heavy-handed

technique, it begs the question of why an event of such magnitude in the history of Canadian theatre should be starved for funding. Canada has an excellent classical tradition in its first stream theatres, and a steady flow of plays from second stream theatres, many of which "express Canadian life," in the words of an old Canada Council Annual Report. It needs its third stream as a source of vital cultural experience for audiences, and as a source of ideas, talent and energy for the theatre community at large.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Ryga, p. 29.
2. Department of the Secretary of State, "Opportunities for Youth: Projects Funded by the Federal Government's Opportunities for Youth program in 1972."
3. Hendry, pp. 268-269.
4. Jack Grey, "The Performing Arts and Government Policy," in Wagner, p. 33.
5. Woodcock, p. 116.
6. Iris M. Bradley, "Performing Arts Audiences (Emphasis on Theatre Audiences," paper prepared for IInd Canadian Congress on Leisure Research (Toronto: Arts and Culture Branch, Secretary of State Department, April, 1978), pp. 25-28.
7. Woodcock, pp. 110-111.
8. Czarnecki, p. 39.
9. Ibid., p. 39.
10. Canada Council, Research And Evaluation, *Trends in the Performing Arts 1972-83*. February, 1986, p. 34.
11. Canada Council Annual Report, 1967-68, p. 11.
12. Czarnecki, p. 41.
13. Canada Council, Research And Evaluation, *Trends in the Performing Arts 1972-83*, p. 34.
14. *C.P.T.A. News*, spring, 1988, Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba, Winnipeg.
15. This figure includes an estimation of the number of people who watched "pass-the-hat" events outdoors.
16. Brian Paisley, *Fringe Theatre Event: A Guide for Production* (Edmonton, Alberta: By the Author, October, 1987), p. 4.
17. *Edmonton Journal*, "Fringefest No Orphan." August 15, 1982, p. D8.
18. Dave Billington, *The Edmonton Sun*, Aug 11th, 1982, p. 36.
19. cited in Nancy Bell and Lynne Van Luven, "Edmonton: Fringe Two," *NeWest Review*, October, 1983, p. 17.
20. Paisley, pp. 19-20.
21. *Canadian Actors' Equity Association Newsletter*, "Fringe Festivals 88." April 1988, p.1.
22. From an interview with Darlene Bradley.
23. From an interview with Brian Paisley.
24. From an interview with Alan Edwards.
25. From an interview with Jan Henderson, founding member of Small Change Theatre.
26. From an interview with Allan Edwards.
27. From an interview with Alexandria Patience.
28. Ibid.

CONCLUSION:

> It is ironic that just as the performing arts in Canada are reaching a new level of maturity, and a vitality and sense of excitement not seen since the early 1970's, government cutbacks in the arts are threatening the very existence of what has been achieved culturally over the past generation. 1

> Apart from a few hundred Canadian visual and performing artists who make it on their own without subsidies from government, there are no artists in this country.
>
> ...the several thousand people who line up at the Canada Council, National Film Board, CBC and numerous other public troughs for grants are only welfare recipients... 2

The theatre in Canada has experienced three major phases of growth, which I have characterized as a first, second, and third stream.

First stream theatres were established between the late fifties and the end of the sixties. Run largely by foreign- trained directors, they aimed at high standards of production. They provided a whole generation of Canadians with both theatrical opportunity and with practical experience. Essentially, however, these were colonial institutions in the sense that their repertoire consisted largely of classics and imported plays from the United States and Europe. They also tended to produce material that was politically bland, partly because of their commitment to the theatre as a primarily aesthetic

experience, and partly because they were appealing to a bourgeois audience.

In the late sixties many new theatres were founded by a second generation of Canadian theatre workers. Inspired by a sense of experimentation and by the optimistic prevailing mood of nationalism, and driven by the desire to establish a theatre that was Canadian in its sensibility, its form, and its content. They also brought counter-cultural and working-class values to the theatre. These theatres flourished during the nineteen seventies until, by the end of that decade, Canada could boast a real theatre of its own, with a solid body of dramatic literature, and a national theatrical infrastructure.

As the 1980s wore on, these theatres found themselves in a position of retrenchment. The very infrastructures that they had striven to establish were in some ways restrictive, in that they forced the theatres into certain characteristic modes of operation by the need to satisfy both the funding bodies' requirements and the growing dependence on audience subscriptions. The techniques of collective creation, so important to the early growth of the second stream, were largely abandoned, and productions became more conventional. They also became smaller, as tighter budgets caused directors to search for, and writers to write for plays with smaller casts.

Nevertheless, a growing body of writers polished their skills, and occasionally, a writer who wrote for the

second stream would be seconded into the first stream theatres. Thus, the second stream sometimes has taken on the function of a kind of off-broadway showcase or proving-ground.

However that may be, the second stream theatres have been experiencing great difficulties both financially and artistically. They compete to find a share of the still-narrow theatrical market, and we observe, as in Edmonton, the problem of several small theatres trying to carve out their niche in the cultural scheme of things. With fiscal restrain comes a greater reliance on corporate funding, which has a conservative effect on the theatrical agenda, and a spirit of caution, which causes many second stream theatres to choose their seasons from amongst a decreasing number of plays. The seasons of many second stream theatres across the country are very similar. This phenomenon mitigates against local culture, because it means that a limited number of plays are considered as "safe bets" in a particular season. Canadian plays become cultural commodities in a national market.

Into this stultified atmosphere was born the third stream, symbolized, and partly led, by the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Event, which is ideally suited to the needs of third stream theatres, in providing an administrative structure and physical theatre spaces, both of which third stream theatres inherently lack. Because third stream theatres are project-oriented rather than season-oriented,

they tend to rely less heavily on the Director-led model that is characteristic of both the first and second streams. Furthermore, because it is in the truest sense "poor theatre," the third stream is admirably suited to the playwright, since text becomes the critical factor in the theatrical presentation.

The core group of this stream are those young theatricians who have either been rejected by the first or second stream theatres, or who perceive them as irrelevant or dated. Freed by its very paucity of resources the third stream is less restricted by the cultural agenda corporate sponsors nor governmental funding agencies. This had not been the case since the early days of the second stream, and it is happening in the a context that is completely unique in the history of Canadian theatre.

There is a cautionary message in all of this.

The scope of third stream theatre is governed by the very restrictions that make the Fringe festival possible at all. Fringe productions are after all business ventures, and as in all business ventures, the desire to succeed financially may override other considerations:

> The higher financial risk and desire for commercial success may also have contributed to the disturbing tendency of some young artists to simply ape the trendier successes of yester-season. If the Fringe reflects the work that the artists themselves want to do, then it is sad that so many of them apparently aspire no further than light comedy or satirical revues with lots of "naughty words" and transvestite humour. 3

Characteristically, new plays written to be presented at the Fringe are limited artistically by monetary and physical restrictions. It is unrealistic for a playwright to hope to present a work which demands a complex setting or an extensive lighting design, and it is difficult, or at least financially unrewarding, to mount any play with even a moderate-sized cast. The result has been that, in the words of one Fringe critic writing about the 1987 festival,

> ...one can almost speak of a distinct "Fringe style.
>
> Conscious theatricality and performer primacy are certainly keynotes. Theatre collectives, co-ops, and improvisational drama troupes assume an unusually high profile at the festival, while fully one-fifth of the 1987 offerings were that most narcissistic of theatrical forms, the one-man show. 4

Although narcissism seems to me to be an unjust charge to lay against artists trying to find the best and most efficient means of communicating at an event like the Fringe, it is true that many one-person shows are presented there for obvious technical and financial reasons. The phenomenon of the one-person show is not, however, restricted to the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Event; it is a logical consequence of the economic fact of the modern Canadian theatre.

During the past fifteen years, artists such as Linda Griffiths, Eric Peterson, Allan Williams, Cheryl Cashman,

Ted Johns, Jan Kadelka and the present author have achieved national and international success with various one-person plays. *Maggie and Pierre*, *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, *5 The Cockroach Trilogy*, *Naked on the North Shore*, *Turning Thirty*, *Circus Gothic* and *Life After Hockey* have all been successfully performed, in some cases abroad, and at least three of these shows (*Maggie and Pierre*, *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, and *Life After Hockey*) have been remounted with a different performer. All of these plays have merit, and some have been lauded as an advance for the Canadian theatre. However, their success has a negative aspect: one-person shows are performed by people who could be contributing to the theatre in other ways, and the single-person format is one that can be imposed on an artist by the lack of other creative outlets. This idea was put succinctly by John Gray, in his introduction to the Talonbooks edition of *Billy Bishop Goes to War*:

> *Billy Bishop Goes to War* was born out of a nasty case of the Three B's of Canadian Theatre -- Broke, Bored, and Branded. Broke, because it was 1976 and there was not much work. Beating a trail from one one-hundred seat theatre to another is the usual lot of the Canadian theatre artist. Consequently, he is always broke. Bored, because our leaders, the Old Warriors of Canadian Nationalism, were in a rut. Audiences were getting ugly and scarce. But being Broke and Bored did not prevent us from being Branded as Canadian Nationalists, and, therefore, unfit for the more cosmopolitan world of the Regional Theatres. And so, we come full circle again, back to Broke-- and the landlord turns off the heat. 6

Third stream theatre is at present making a vigorous contribution to our cultural life, but it operates on the very edges of viability, and depends upon the hard an largely unrewarded labour of its workers. Audiences come to the Fringe festivals to enjoy the party atmosphere; some theatre directors come to see if there is anything they can try out in their own season. But if Canadian theatre is to survive as a vital art form, Canadians must come to the theatres year-round, and support the theatre in general through those agencies, including governmental agencies, which have been set up to ensure a measure of financial stability. First and second stream theatres must recognize that something important is happening at the Festivals and in the small venues, and be flexible enough to integrate the best third stream artists and their work into their own. Ryga warned many years ago of a poverty-stricken Canadian drama. If this is not to happen, governments, theatres, and audiences are going to have to give money, work, and time, to prevent it.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Anton Wagner, p. 16
2. Walter Block and Michael Walker of the Frazer Institute, quoted in *Actrascope*, vol. 17, no.1 Summer, 1989, p. 1.

3. Day, Moira: "Fringe '87: The State of the Art",NeWest Review vol. 13, #2, (October, 1987), 12.
4. Ibid. p. 13.
5. I am taking something of a liberty to describe *Billy Bishop Goes to War* as a one-man show. While it is true that the script calls for a musician who sings along with the primary actor, it is also true that the play is largely delivered by one actor, and certainly calls upon the skills of delivery which are characteristic of a one man show: the ability to tell a story and to treat the audience as though they were another character.
6. John Gray, introduction to *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1980)

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Appendix 1:
Seasons of Eleven Representative First Stream Theatres, 1973-1974 and 1980-1981 1

Theatres surveyed:

Bastion Theatre, Victoria; The Vancouver Playhouse, Vancouver; Citadel Theatre, Edmonton; Theatre Calgary, Calgary; Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg; National Arts Centre, Ottawa; Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake; The Stratford Festival, Stratford; Toronto Arts Productions, Toronto; Theatre New Brunswick, Fredericton; Neptune Theatre, Halifax.

1973-1974 season:

Bastion Theatre:
The Death of a Salesman
Born Yesterday
Private Lives
The Fourposter
A Doll's House
Arsenic and Old Lace

The Vancouver Playhouse:
Mandragola
A Doll's House
Dutch Uncle
Queer Sights
The Taming of the Shrew
Harvey
The Adventures of Pinocchio

Citadel Theatre:
Child's Play
How the Other Half Loves
That Championship Season
Oedipus Rex
Scapin!
The Rivals
Anything Goes

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1. From *Canada On Stage The Canadian Theatre Review Yearbook* 1971 and 1980-81. (Downsview: Canadian Theatre Review Publications).

Theatre Calgary

Jaques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris
The Fantasticks
Play It Again, Sam
The Seagull
The Prisoner of Second Avenue
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The Rivals
The Threepenny Opera

Manitoba Theatre Centre:

The Dybbuk
Godspell
The Plough and the Stars
The Farm Show (guest production)
Indian
Black Comedy
The Sunshine Boys
The Cherry Orchard
The Brave Little Tailor
(MTC Warehouse:)
You're Gonna Be Alright, Jamie-Boy (guest production from Tarragon Theatre)
Esker Mike and His Wife Agliuk
Jubalay
Old Times

National Arts Centre:

The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui
Oedipus (guest production)
Scapin (guest production)
Woyzeck

Shaw Festival:

The Devil's Disciple
Charley's Aunt
Too True to be Good
Rosmersholm
The Admirable Bashville

Stratford Festival:

The Imaginary Invalid
Pericles
Love's Labour's Lost
The Life and Death of King John
:La Vie Parisienne
The Summoning of Everyman
The Medium
Walsh
Ready, Steady, Go

Toronto Arts Productions:
Trelawny of the Wells
Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust
The Good Woman of Setzuan
The Dybbuk (guest production)
Wu-Feng
The Rivals

Theatre New Brunswick:
Death of a Salesman
Who Killed Santa Claus?
Born Yesterday (guest production)
The Fantasticks
Frankenstein
The Fourposter
The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance

Neptune Theatre:
Love's Labour's Lost
Arter Magritte
The Real Inspector Hound
Of the Fields, Lately
The Devil's Disciple (guest production)
The Good Soldier Scheik (adapted by Keith Turnbull)
Harvey
Godspell
The Adventures of Pinocchio

1980-1981 Season:

Bastion Theatre:
Life With Father
Deathtrap
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Jitters
The Miracle Worker
Automatic Pilot
The Importance of Being Earnest
Wings (guest production)
Hedda Gabler
Black Comedy
I'm Herbert

Vancouver Playhouse:

Love for Love
A Streetcar Named Desire
The Servant of Two Masters
The Red Devil Battery Sign
The Man Who Came to Dinner
The Lady From the Sea

at Spratt's ark (2nd stage:)

Henry iv, part 1
As You Like It

at The Waterfront (2nd stage:)

Dreaming and Duelling
Macbeth

Citadel Theatre:

Hey Marilyn
One Tiger to a hill
Arms and the Man
Blue Champagne (guest production)
The Black Bonspiel of Wullie Maccrimmon (guest production)
Juve (guest production)
Drummer (guest production)
A Life
Ballerina
A Flea in Her Ear
Whose Life Is It Anyway
The Miser
Grease

at the Rice Theatre (2nd stage:)

Macbeth
National Multicultural Theatre Festival
Groucho at Large
Love in the Backseat
The Servant of Two Masters
A Day in the Death of Joe Egg
The Hollow Crown

Theatre Calgary:

The Words of My Roaring (based on writings of Robert Kroetsch)
Mirandolina
The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon
TheBirds
Jitters
Betrayal
Automatic Pilot
Maggie and Pierre (guest production)
The Tempest
Happy End (guest production)
The Kite

Midnight Series:

Blitzkrieg
Rainbow
The Man with the Flower in his Mouth
Out at Sea
Spider Rabbit
Solange
The Beard
Joggers
years of Sorrow/Years of Shame

Manitoba Theatre Centre:

Absurd Person Singular
The Seagull
The Diary of Anne Frank
Dracula
Billy Bishop Goes to War (guest production)
Jitters
Balconville (guest production)
Grease (co-production with Citadel Theatre)
The Elephant Man
As You Like It

at the Warehouse (2nd stage):

Waiting for the Parade
Talley's folly
Spokesong
Betrayal
Macbeth
Bent
1837: The Farmer's Revolt

National Arts Centre:

Jon Juan
Henry V
Mother Courage
OUr Town
The Grand Hunt (guest production)
St. Mark's Gospel (guest production)
John and the Missus
Rock and Roll (co-prod)

Studio space:

Savages
Robert Burns -Out of Print
Five Good reasons to Laugh (guest production)
Loot
La Sagouine (guest production)
The Wonderful World of Sarah Binks (guest production)
Blood Relations
Ghosts

Toronto Arts Productions:

The Matchmaker
A Mad World, My Masters
Born Yesterday
Macbeth
A Little Something to Ease the Pain
A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum
Plenty
The Winslow Boy

Theatre New Brunswick:

On Golden Pond
*Free At Last**
Twelfth Night
The Glass Menagerie
Eight to the Bar
A Christmas Carol
Billy Bishop Goes to War (guest production)
Chapter Two
The Miracle Worker

Neptune Theatre:

The End of the Beginning
How the Other Half Loves
The Ruffian on the Stair
The Master Builder
The Workhouse Ward
Butterlies Are Free
The Dumb Waiter
The Fourposter
Much Ado About Nothing
The Taming of the Shrew
Villiage Wooing
The Night of the Iguana
Lunch With Tennessee Williams
Salt Cod and Pork Scraps
Medea
Winners
The Diary of a Scoundrel